

No. 29.]

THE
DUTY OF THE CHURCH
IN THE
INSTRUCTION AND DISCIPLINE
OF HER
BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

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WHAT IS THE POSITION BEFORE GOD OF A BELIEVER'S CHILD?

It is what God has determined, and not what man may think. It is in a *Covenant* of mercy through Jesus, which springing entirely from the love of God to fallen man, bears throughout the decisive marks of sovereignty, and of divine appointment, and not at all of man's choice. This covenant does not wait for man to give his consent to it, but free, independent, and thus ever merciful, because ever sovereign, it goes before man in everything. It puts man under the *covenant* before he can either accept or even know the privilege: it calls him there according to its own purpose, and not according to the will of man; and besides, determines at pleasure the sign of this relation. Sometimes, as in regard to the seed of Abraham, this sign is a seal applied to a single family; at another, it is His *Great Name*, accompanied by a seal, to be applied to all mankind. Now this new seal, Baptism by water, symbolizing regeneration by the Holy Ghost, is to be put upon every member of the *covenant*, along with the *Name of God*. Hence the child to whom the seal is affixed is visibly marked by God as belonging to the *Covenant of Promise*. Therefore, not to consider him such, or to treat him like the child of a heathen, or to train him in the nurture and admonition of the world, is at once to despise or deny the supremacy of the divine *Covenant* to which the child belongs, and to deprive him of the blessings to which he, as a *consecrated* child, is entitled.

Let no one say, with thoughtless haste, "What is the use of baptism to an infant who cannot comprehend its meaning?" O man who thus speakest! Have you not sufficient understanding and faith to know that God does nothing useless, and that if He ordain Baptism, it is for an end which His wisdom, and not thine, has instituted, and which is accomplished in *His ways*, poor sinner! and not in thine! Did the only wise God consult you respecting His covenant, when He made the child of Abraham to be circumcised? Dare you ask the same question in respect to *circumcision*, of which the Holy Spirit says that the advantage is "much every way?" Circumcision, of old, was never administered to a stranger until he had formally abandoned his idols and confessed the *NAME OF THE LORD*; and moreover, as this proselyte, if he were the head of a family, did not enter into the *Covenant* alone, but took his children with him,—so, when a Lydia of Thyatira, or a gaoler of Philippi, both aliens from this covenant, professed their submission to it, they were not received into it alone, but *their households, all that were in their house*, were baptized with them, as was also the case with the household of Stephanas. The Holy Spirit, receiving the child in the covenant, directs that it should be brought up, not for the nurture of the Lord, in order to bring it into the covenant, but in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as already there.

The Promise was to Abraham and his seed, that the seed of the faithful should be blessed—His mercy is from generation to generation towards them that fear him. He says of the children of His people, of such is the kingdom of Heaven, and to receive one of them in His name is to receive Him.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

I REMEMBER having read shortly after its publication, the Report of the Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, presented in 1812, on "The Duty of the Church in the Instruction and Discipline of her Baptized Children." I then felt that it was an able document on a subject of great importance, and that it deserved to be widely circulated, and carefully pondered among our ministry, and through our Churches. Since then I lost sight of it, and it is only recently that it has been brought again to my notice. On a renewed perusal of it, my original conviction has been strongly confirmed, and I feel gratified that an edition is now in the press, which will be widely circulated among the ministry. There are a few points in it on which a difference of opinion may exist. The question whether the Confession of Faith made by a parent in offering his children in baptism, necessarily implies actual participation of the Lord's Supper, or a pledge henceforth to observe it, is in this Report answered in the affirmative. It has not however, been so determined in the Constitution, or by the Judicature of either the Presbyterian or our Reformed Dutch Church; while Sessions and Consistories are left to their Christian liberty as to this point. This subject is one of great interest, and the discussion in the Report of the view taken has much force, and deserves attention. The mode it prescribes for the discipline by the Church of its baptized children, may not meet with united approbation, while the opinion will prevail with all, that the Church is bound to exercise a faithful watch over these children, for their

spiritual training and benefit; and to extend to them a wise, salutary and just discipline. With these exceptions, which may exist in many minds, there must be a concurrent opinion, as to the importance of the topics presented, the ability with which they are discussed, and the value of the practical suggestions which it furnishes.

The ordinance of baptism, ministered to believers and their children, is one of rich significance, precious to the faith of the Church of God, and when rightly regarded, and appropriately applied, and improved, imparting a quickening and comforting influence: The promise of the Abrahamic covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," is brought to the faith of the parent, and casting himself upon it, he leaves the pledge of his fidelity to bring up his children in the "nurture, and admonition of the Lord." The Church receives the children into her bosom, and pledges her care, and watch, her prayers and counsels, and the employment of all right means to train them for God, and for heaven. Here the duties of parents and of the Church meet in happy co-operation, mutually helping, and strengthening each other, in bringing up the baptized children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is to be feared that the relation of the baptized children to the Church, is too rarely, and imperfectly brought to view from the pulpit, and that the duties of the Church in that relation are too much lost sight of. In consequence, the sacredness and preciousness of the ordinance of infant baptism are less highly esteemed. It is time to revive the subject, and bring it to the attention of Ministers and Churches prominently. Tracts on the duties of parents and churches in promoting the religious and scriptural education of the young would be highly useful.

At the Reformation, in the different branches of the Protestant Churches, great stress was laid upon the importance of the duty of the Church, to provide for, and secure the religious instruction and training of the children and youth. This was particularly the case with the Reformed Church of Holland. The following was adopted by the Synod of Dort, in 1619; but it was almost a transcript of what was previously adopted at one of the earliest Synods, in 1578. I have been struck with the correspondence between it and the outlines in this report:

"In order that the Christian youth may be diligently instructed in the principles of religion, and be trained in piety, three modes of catechising should be employed. I. IN THE HOUSE BY PARENTS. II. IN THE SCHOOLS BY SCHOOLMASTERS. III. IN THE CHURCHES by Ministers, Elders, and Catechists, especially appointed for the purpose. That these may diligently employ their trust, they shall be requested to promote by their authority, so sacred and necessary a work ; and all who have the oversight of churches and schools shall be required to pay special attention to this matter.

"I. The office of PARENTS, is diligently to instruct their children, and their whole households in the principles of the Christian religion, in a manner adapted to their respective capacities ; earnestly and carefully to admonish them to the cultivation of true piety ; to engage their punctual attendance on family worship, and to take them with them to the hearing of the word of God. They should require the children to give an account of the sermons they hear, especially those on the Catechism ; assign them some chapters of Scripture to read, and certain passages to commit to memory ; and then impress and illustrate the truths contained in them, in a familiar manner, adapted to the tenderness of youth. Thus they are to prepare them for being catechised in the schools, and by attendance on them to encourage them, and promote their edification. Parents are to be exhorted to the faithful discharge of their duty by the public preaching of the word ; but especially at the ordinary period of family visitation, before the administration of the Lord's Supper, and also at other times by the Ministers and Elders. Parents who profess religion and are negligent in this work, shall be admonished by the Ministers, and if the occasion requires they shall be censured by the Consistory, that they may be brought to the discharge of their duty.

"II. SCHOOLS in which the young shall be properly instructed in the principles of Christian doctrine, not only in cities, but also in towns, and country places, where heretofore none have existed. The Christian magistracy shall be requested that well qualified persons may be employed, and enabled to devote themselves to the service ; and especially, that the children of the poor may be gratuitously instructed, and not be excluded from the benefit of the schools. In this office none shall be employed but such as are members of the Church, having cer-

tificates of an upright faith, and pious life, and of being well versed in the truths of the Catechism. The schoolmasters shall instruct their scholars according to their age and capacity, at least two days in the week, not only by causing them to commit to memory, but also by instilling into their minds an acquaintance with the truths of the Catechism, (an elementary small Catechism, the Compendium, and the Heidelberg Catechism, are there specified to be used by the different grades of children and youth). The schoolmasters shall take care not only that the scholars commit these Catechisms to memory, but that they suitably understand the doctrine contained in them. For this purpose they shall properly explain to every one, in a manner adapted to his capacity, and frequently enquire if they understand them. The schoolmasters shall bring every one of the pupils committed to their charge to the hearing of the preached word, and particularly to the preaching on the Catechism, and require from them an account of the same.

"III. In order that due knowledge may be obtained of the diligence of the schoolmasters, and the improvement of youth, it shall be the duty of the *Ministers*, and if necessary, with an Elder, to visit all the schools, private, as well as public, frequently, in order to excite the teachers to earnest diligence, to encourage and counsel them in the duty of catechising, and to furnish an example by questioning them; addressing them in a friendly and affectionate manner, and exciting them to early piety and diligence. If any of the schoolmasters should be found neglectful, or perverse, they should be earnestly exhorted by the Ministers, and if necessary, by the Consistory, in relation to their office. The Ministers in the discharge of their public duty in the church, shall preach on the Catechism. Their sermons shall be comparatively short, and accommodated as far as practicable to the comprehension of youth as well as adults. The labors of those Ministers will be praiseworthy, who search out country places, and see that catechetical instruction be supplied, and faithfully preserved. Experience teaches that the ordinary instruction of the Church, catechetical and other, is not sufficient for many to instil that knowledge of the Christian religion, which should among the people of God be well grounded; and also testifies that the living voice has very great influence; that

familiar and suitable questions and answers, adapted to the apprehension of each individual, is the best mode of catechising, in order to impress the principles of religion upon the heart. It shall be the duty of a Minister to go with an Elder to all capable of instruction, and collect them in their houses, the Consistory chamber, or some other suitable place, (a number particularly of those more advanced in years), and explain familiarly to them the articles of the Christian Faith, and catechise them according to the circumstances of their different capacities, progress, and knowledge; they shall question them on the matter of the public sermons on the Catechism. Those who desire to unite with the Church, shall, three or four weeks before the administration of the Lord's Supper, be more carefully and frequently instructed, that they may be better qualified, and be more free to give a satisfactory account of their faith. The Ministers shall employ diligent care to ascertain those who give any hopeful evidence of serious concern for the salvation of their souls, and invite them unto them, assembling them together who have like impressions, and encouraging them to friendly intercourse and free conversation with each other. Their meetings shall commence with appropriate prayer and exhortation. If all this shall be done by the Ministers with that cordiality, faithfulness, and discretion, which become those who must give an account of the flock committed to them, it is not to be doubted that in a short time, abundant fruit of their labor shall be found in growth in religious knowledge and holiness of life, to the glory of God, and the prosperity of the Church of Christ."

There are parts in this scheme for the religious instruction of the young, referring to the magistracy and state enactments. The connection between Church and State, then existing in Holland, can find no place in this happy land. Let me revert with delight to the parochial systems there and in Scotland, when religious truth was blended with common school instruction. The former glory of Holland has departed, and now religious instruction is formally banished from her common schools. It is a gratifying circumstance that our General Synod has directed attention to these subjects adverted to, and directed them to be presented annually from the pulpit.

THOMAS DE WITT.

THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH

IN THE

Instruction and Discipline of her Baptized Children.

[A BRIEF historical account of the important article, here inserted, may be useful and interesting. The article is the Report of a Committee, consisting of Drs. Samuel Miller, John B. Romeyn, and James Richards, appointed by the General Assembly, in 1811. The instruction and discipline of the baptized children of the Church was brought before the Assembly in 1809, by the following minute:—

“Whereas the Book of Discipline states, that children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the Church, and specifies various important particulars in which that inspection and government should be exercised, as also directs the mode in which they should be treated, if they do not perform the duties of church members; and, whereas, there is reason to apprehend that many of our congregations neglect to catechise the children that have been admitted to the sealing ordinance of baptism, and do not exercise suitable discipline over them, therefore,

“*Resolved*, That the different Presbyteries within our bounds, are hereby directed to inquire of the different sessions, whether a proper pastoral case be exercised over baptized children in their congregations, that they learn the principles of religion, and walk in newness of life before God; and that said Presbyteries do direct all sessions that are delinquent in this respect, to attend to it carefully and without delay.”
Minutes of Assembly, p. 431, *new edition*.

In the year 1811, the subject was again brought before the Assembly, by an overture from the Synod of Kentucky, as appears by the following action:—

“*Resolved*, That Drs. Miller and Romeyn, and the Rev. James Richards, be a committee to prepare and report to the

next Assembly, a full and complete answer to the following overture from the Synod of Kentucky, which has been made to this Assembly:—

“What steps should the Church take with baptized youth, not in communion, but arrived at the age of maturity, should such youth prove disorderly or contumacious?” p. 509.

The foregoing committee presented to the Assembly, in 1812, a report, which is here republished *verbatim*. The Report awakened much interest and discussion; and the Assembly ordered its publication, without coming to any decision on its principles. The following was the minute adopted:—

“The Committee appointed by the last Assembly to report to this Assembly on the subject of *disciplining baptized children*, reported; and the Report being read, was recommended to the same committee for revision and publication, and it was

“*Resolved*, That the Assembly, without expressing any opinion on the principles it contains, recommend it to the serious consideration of all the Presbyteries and ministers, that in due time a decision may be had on the important subjects discussed in the Report.” p. 509.

The same committee reported to the Assembly in 1813, that they had revised and published the Report, and sent copies to the different Presbyteries. p. 519.

In 1814, the following action was had: “The subject of a Report on the *disciplining of baptized children*, in relation to which the Assembly of the last, year, and the year before, had taken order, was called up; and it appeared that several Presbyteries had brought forward a formal expression of their opinion in regard to the adoption or rejection of the Report in question. On this, a discussion having arisen whether the report was intended to be sent to the Presbyteries, for the expression of Presbyterial opinion on the subject, it was therefore,

“*Resolved*, That the whole subject be referred to a committee, to consider and report to the Assembly, what shall appear to them to be the correct method of procedure to be adopted relative thereto, in the circumstances in which it is now before the Assembly, and that Drs. Green, Woodhull, and Wilson, and Messrs. Caldwell and Connelly, be the committee.” p. 543.

At a subsequent period in the sessions of the same Assembly, this committee made a report, which was laid upon the table. p. 547. The Report was afterwards taken up, "was again read, and recommitted to the same committee, with the addition of Drs. Griffin and Blatchford, and Messrs. Blackburn, Fisher, and Hazlett." p. 551. Finally, on the last day of the sessions of the Assembly, the committee were discharged, "and the subject was indefinitely postponed." p. 567.

It appears from this history, that the Report on the discipline of baptized children, was the occasion of awakening much attention to the subject, and that the Assembly preferred to leave the matter as it stood in the standards of the Church, without expressing any opinion.

As to the *author* of the Report, tradition distinctly assigns it to Dr. ROMEYN, of New York. Drs. Miller and Richards, approved of the principles of the Report, by signing their names to it.

The *title* of the Report has been slightly changed, for the sake of giving a clearer insight into its discussions. The title of the pamphlet edition is as follows: "Report of a Committee of the General Assembly, appointed to draft a PLAN FOR DISCIPLINING BAPTIZED CHILDREN." The Report discusses largely, the principles which underlie the whole subject of religious instruction and government.

The Report, in this republication of it, has been divided into *sections*, for the convenience of the general reader.

All will probably admit the extraordinary ability of the Report, and will acquiesce in many of its reasonings, without adopting all its views about excommunication. The remarks about the *religious instruction* of baptized children show that the present views of our Church on the subject, were familiar to the Presbyterians of the last generation.—*Editor*].

THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH IN THE INSTRUCTION AND DISCIPLINE OF HER BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

In well regulated communities, provision has ever been made for the education and future usefulness of children. Their instruction and their habits, are considered as matters of essential importance to the respectability and happiness of

the whole body. In the Church of God they hold a station not less conspicuous, and for their benefit directions are given by God in his word. In the dispensation of the Old Testament, they, as well as their parents, constituted a part of the congregation of the Lord; and to them, as such, circumcision, the sign of the covenant between God and the father of the faithful, together with his faithful seed, that is, the Church, was administered. The standing which they then held, has not been taken from them under the dispensation of the New Testament, for the promise is still to them, as well as their parents. Hence, as members of the Church, they receive the sign and seal of the sacrament of the Christian circumcision, which is Baptism. This principle being adopted in the standards of our Church, it will be necessary to show what view our standards give of the sacraments of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and also of the visible Church, that we may thoroughly understand the relation which the children of her members sustain to her, and thus be enabled to judge concerning the nature and execution of that discipline, which ought to be exercised towards them.

THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

The Confession of Faith of our Church, chap. xxvii. sect. 1, teaches us, that "sacraments are holy signs, and seals of the covenant of grace, to put *a visible difference* between those that belong to the Church, and the rest of the world." Similar is the language of the Larger Catechism, in the answer to the 162d question, where "a sacrament is called an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in *his Church*, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are *within the covenant of grace*, the benefits of his mediation." Hence, it is expressly stated in the answer to the 166th question of the same, "that baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church:" and provision is made in the 29th chapter of the Confession, and in answers to the 169, 170, 171, 172, 173 questions of the Larger Catechism, to "keep off from the Lord's Table such as are not visible members of the Church."

In this view of the sacraments, and of the persons to whom alone they may be lawfully administered, our Church agrees with the purest and best churches formed at the period of the Reformation in different parts of Europe, as also with the

first Churches in New England. Several authorities will be quoted in detail, and references made to others.*

The former Confession of Helvetia (or Switzerland), which was written in Basil about the year 1636, in behalf of all the Churches of Helvetia, says expressly, "the sacraments do appertain to them which are in the Church."

The Confession of Bohemia, published in the year 1573, also called the Confession of the Waldenses, terms "the sacraments, holy covenants, of God with his Church, and of the Church with God."

The French Confession, drawn up in the year 1559, by the Reformed in that kingdom, in the 35th article, acknowledges that there are only two sacraments which are common to the whole Church. In the Belgic or Reformed Dutch Church Confession, published by all the Belgic or Dutch Churches in the year 1566, it is said, art. 33, "We believe that God, having regard to our dullness and infirmity, did institute sacraments for us, that by them his promises might be *sealed* unto us, and that they might be most certain pledges of his heavenly love towards us, and of *his gifts bestowed upon us, for the cherishing and sustaining of our faith.*"

The first Synod of the Churches of New England, held at Cambridge, 1648, unanimously judged the Westminster Confession of Faith, in all matters of faith, to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious; only excepting to those parts which relate to church government and discipline.† Their view of the sacraments was therefore the same with that which our Confession gives.

In the second session of this Synod, held in Boston in 1680, a Confession, essentially the same with the Westminster, but differing in its phraseology and arrangement was adopted. In the 28 chap. sect. 1, of this Confession, it is said, "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by Christ, to represent him and his benefits, and to *confirm our interest in him.*"

The Connecticut Churches, in an assembly of elders and messengers, held at Saybrook, 1708, adopting the abovementioned Confession, maintained the same opinion on this subject.

A similar doctrine is taught in the Augsburg Confession,

* These authorities are taken from a "Harmony of the Confessions of the Faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches." London, 1043.

† Mather's Mag. Chr. Am. 5, b. 1, p. 8.

art. 3—the Confession of Saxony, art. 2—of Sueveland,* art. 16—of England, art. 25—of Basil, art. 5.

Indeed, on this point there appears to have been no material difference among the Reformed Churches.

Having thus seen that, according to our standards, and the Confessions of the Protestant Churches, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, legitimately belong only to the visible Church, we proceed to exhibit the view they give of the *visible Church*.

In the answer to the sixty-second question of the Larger Westminster Catechism, the visible Church is defined to be “a society made up of all such, as in all ages and places of the world profess the true religion, and their children.” To understand this answer correctly, we must attend first to the nature of the profession required in adults, to constitute them members of the Church, and then to the relation which the children, either by birth or adoption, of such adults, sustain to the Church as members thereof.

I. The profession meant in the above answer, according to the answer to the one hundred and sixty-sixth question of the Larger Catechism, is more particularly specified to be “a profession of faith in Christ and obedience to him.” The faith, of which mention is made in the answer to the eighty-sixth question of the Shorter Catechism, is defined to be “a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel.” Obedience to Christ, is a conformity of conduct and conversation to all the commandments of Christ.

In full agreement with this view, is the doctrine of other Reformed Churches. In the latter Confession of Helvetia, which was framed by the pastors of Zurich, in the year 1566, and approved by their confederates of Bern, and other parts of Switzerland, as also by those of Geneva, and the Churches of Hungary and Scotland, the Church, in chap. 17, is defined to be “a community of all saints, *i. e.* of them who do truly know and rightly worship, and *serve* the true God in Jesus Christ the Saviour, by the word and the Holy Spirit, and which by faith are partakers of all those good graces which are freely offered through Christ.” In the Confession of Basil,

*This is the Confession of the four cities, Strasburg, Constance, Memingen, and Lindau, presented to Charles V. 1580.

which was written in the year 1532, by the ministers of the Church of Basil, and allowed by the pastors of Strasbourg, "All they are said to be citizens of the Christian Church, which do truly confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, and do show forth that faith by the works of love."

The 19th article of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England, specifies the Church to be a "congregation of faithful men."

The Belgic Confession, in the 27th art. defines the Church to be "a holy congregation of true Christian believers."

In the Confession of Augsburg, presented in the year 1530 to Charles the V. by the Protestants of Germany, it is stated, "to speak properly, the Church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ, *i. e.* of the saints who do truly believe and rightly obey Christ."

The French Confession, in the 27th art. affirms that the Church is a company of *the faithful*, which agree together in following the Word of God, and in embracing pure religion.

The Cambridge Platform, in the 12th chap. 2d sect. says, "the things which are requisite to be found in all church members, are repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus; and therefore, these are the things whereof *men* are to be examined at their admission into the Church,* and which then they must profess and hold forth in such sort, as may satisfy rational charity that the things are indeed."

The Confession adopted by the Synod of the New England Churches, in Boston, and afterwards by that of the Churches of Connecticut, in Saybrook, defines the visible Catholic Church, in chap. 26, sect. 2, to be "the whole body of men throughout the world, professing the faith of the Gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ, according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors subverting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation."

The same doctrine is taught in the Confession of Bohemia,† chap. 8—of Saxony, art. 11—of Wirtemberg, art. 32—of Sueveland, art. 15.

* The men here meant, according to the 6th sect. of the same chapter, are those adults who "were never in church society before." In chap. 8, sect. 2, "the children of such as are holy," *i. e.* of visible saints, are declared to be members of the Church.

† The poor persecuted remains of the Albigenses or Valdenses, presented to Fran-

To these authorities the opinions of the principal Reformers might be added, but it is deemed superfluous. Enough has been said, to prove, that in the judgment of other Reformed Churches, as well as our own, the profession which constitutes visible membership in the Church, is that of saving faith in the Lord Jesus and obedience to his commandments.

II. We proceed to show the nature of that relation, which the children by birth or adoption, of such adults as make the above profession, sustain to the Church as members thereof. As the birth of children is the consequence of a law of nature, and not of the covenant of grace, so these children, as well as all others, come into the world children of wrath. They therefore are not members of the Church in the same manner as adults, *i. e.* by profession, as before described; for of such membership they are not capable. Nevertheless, since they belong to their parents, as their flesh and blood, and their chief earthly good, they, in virtue of this union with their parents, are related to the Church as her children. Not that the faith of their parents is imputed to them, and they on that account are considered within the Church. But God, by virtue of his own free and sovereign goodness, has given unto the members of his Church very precious promises, not only to them personally, but to their seed. Thus he assured Abraham, Gen. 17, "I will be a God unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee;" and the Apostle Peter, in Acts 2, says, "the promise is to you and to your children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The promise is, not that God will convert and save every one of these children; but that he will, by virtue of Christ's death, from such children of wrath, raise up a seed to serve him. On the ground of the promise, therefore, the children of those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to his commandments, are considered as members of the Church. As the promise is made only to the members of the Church, and as we cannot acknowledge any one to be a member who does not profess faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to his commandments; it follows that none, but the children, by birth or adoption, of parents, one or both of

cis L, in the year 1200, their Confession, in which they call the Church "one holy congregation of all the elect of God."—*Jortin's Life of Erasmus*, vol. 3, p. 106, 8vo. Ed. 1803. Lond.

whom do thus profess faith and obedience, can be considered as the subjects of the promise, and thus within the Church. We have added children by adoption, to those by birth, because there is nothing in the word of God and in the standards of our Church to forbid such adoption.

To these and no other children, the sacrament of baptism may be lawfully administered. Thus, in the answer to the 166 question of the Larger Catechism, it is said, "Infants descending from parents either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are *in that respect* within the covenant, and are to be baptized."

In agreement with this, the latter Confession of Helvetia restricts the privilege to "young infants born of faithful parents;" the former to "such as are born of the people of God;" the French Confession, to infants born of "holy parents;" the Belgic, to the infants of believers, "the children of the faithful;" the Confession of Saxony, "to those only, which are engrafted into the Church;" the Confession adopted at Boston, and afterwards at Saybrook, to "the infants of one or both believing parents, and to those only."

To these authorities may be added the forms for baptizing infants, used by the French, Genevan, and Dutch Churches,* which are founded upon the fact that the infants are presented by persons professing faith in and obedience to Christ.

In addition to these public testimonies, the opinions of Calvin, the elder Turretine, Beza, Witsius, and others might be adduced. We only quote Frith, one of the English martyrs, whose words are a proper conclusion on this subject. "Baptism is given before the congregation unto him, which before he receiveth it, hath either professed the religion of Christ, or else hath the word of promise, by the which promise he is known to be of the sensible congregation of Christ." In

* The language used in the form of the Reformed Dutch Church for baptizing infants, is remarkably precise on this point. "Baptism, it is said, is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God." Further, in the exhortation to the parents, we have these words, "Beloved in the Lord Christ, you have heard that baptism is an ordinance of God, to seal unto us and to our seed his covenant; therefore it must be used to that end," *i. e.* as a seal to us and to our seed, of his covenant with us and our seed. Can a person then use baptism as such a seal, if that person does not profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him? Moreover, the first question requires the parent or parents to answer that his child is "sanctified in Christ, and therefore a member of his Church." How is it possible for any parent to profess this, "if he has not himself the hope that he by faith is united to Christ?" Or, can he profess his child to be in Christ, "if he does not profess himself to be in Christ."

these words, the two grounds on which membership rests, are distinctly noticed,—1, in adults, the ground is their profession; 2, in infants, the word of promise.

We have been the more full in our quotations from our own standards, and those of other Reformed Churches, on the subject of the sacraments and the Church, not merely to show the pleasing harmony which existed between the Reformed Churches at their commencement; but chiefly to exhibit a warning testimony against prevailing errors on these subjects. The errors to which we refer, are these, “that the right and power, of handing down baptism to our children, are derived from the baptism of the parent;” “that the original guilt of baptized infants, is so covered by the blood of atonement, symbolized in baptism, that its condemning power, at least with regard to baptized infants dying in infancy, is destroyed by the grace of the new covenant;” “that a profession of saving faith in adults, is not requisite to entitle them to baptism;” “that a mere owning of the covenant, without a credible profession of a person’s being in the covenant, entitles him to the baptism of his children;” “that a child ought not to be punished, by refusing baptism, for the faults of its parent;” “that a parent’s profession is to be considered credible, if his life be moral, without inquiring into his religious practice, or exacting from him a promise of obedience to all the commandments of Christ;” “that a person may lawfully be admitted to the Lord’s Supper, who neglects religious duties, though he may be moral in his deportment;” and “that the sacraments are converting ordinances, intended to regenerate sinners, or to procure the pardon of sins.” The quotations we have made, prove that the Reformed Churches considered the sacraments as *confirming* ordinances, intended only for the members of the visible Church; the visible Church, as composed only of those adults who *credibly profess saving faith in Christ, and obedience to him*, and their infants; the profession required in adults, that of saving faith; the right of handing down infant baptism, as derived not from the mere fact of a parent’s being himself baptized, but from his professing credibly the great truths taught by his baptism; the cleansing efficacy of the blood of atonement symbolized by baptism, as sealed not so much to the infant baptized, as to the Church; the relation which children sustain to the

Church, as arising altogether from the *promise*; the promise as made only to those who walked in the steps of faithful Abraham, and none as possessing the promise, who do not obey all the commandments of Christ, as well as profess faith in him.

CHILDREN, AS MEMBERS OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH, ARE
PROPER SUBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

The children of those parents who profess faith and obedience as before described, being thus the proper recipients of the privilege of baptism, are also legitimate subjects of Christian discipline. As members of the household of faith, they are subject to its rules and its authority, in the same manner as children are subject to the rules and authority of the house or family to which they belong. They are not subject as adults, until they become adults, but as children; and that care and discipline, which is suited to their age and character, must be exercised over them. This is fully established in the form of discipline and government of our Church, in that part which relates to forms of process, chap. 1, sect. 1, where it is said, "Inasmuch as baptized persons are members of the Church, they are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline." And in the Directory for Worship, chap. 9, sect. 1, it is said, "Children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the Church."

Agreeably to this principle, our mother Church in Scotland, has from the earliest period of her establishment, made provision for the instruction and discipline of her children. By different acts of the General Assembly, she has declared their education to be under the inspection of her judicatories, and directed the course of their studies accordingly. Thus we find, that as far back as the reign of James the VI. none were admitted to instruct the youth, but such as should be tried by the visitors of the Kirk. (Steuart's (Pardovan) Collections, b. 1, tit. 17, sect. 1). The General Assembly, in 1638, ratified the acts of the Assembly, 1565-67-95, "whereby visitation of colleges is to be had by way of commission from the General Assembly; and the principal regents and professors within colleges, and masters and doctors of schools, are to be tried by them, concerning the soundness of their judgment, in

matters of religion, their ability for discharge of their calling, and the honesty of their conversation." (Steuart's Collec., b. 1, tit. 17, sec). The same Assembly directed the several presbyteries to settle schools in every landward parish, and provide men able for the teaching of youth. (Do., b. 1, tit. 5, sect. 2). By an act of the Assembly, 1642, a *grammar school* was erected in every presbytery, seat, and burg. (Do.—do.—do). In 1645, the Assembly passed an act for the advancement of learning and good order in colleges and grammar schools, in which details for regulating the education of youth are given. The Assembly of 1700, appointed all presbyteries to take special, particular, and exact notice of all schoolmasters, governors, and pedagogues of youth, within their respective bounds, and oblige them to subscribe the Confession of Faith, and in case of continued negligence (after admonition), error, or immorality, "or not being careful to educate those under their charge, in the Protestant reformed religion," points out the mode in which they are to be punished. (Do., b. 1, tit. 5, sect. 1). By an act of the Assembly, 1706, it is enjoined, that presbyteries visit grammar schools twice a year, by some of their own number. (Do., b. 1, t. 17, sect. 4). The above acts, which have been selected from a mass, relating to the same subject, fully prove that the mother Church, considering herself responsible for her children, has directed their education in schools and colleges, that they might thus be trained up for God. In this she has acted upon the principle, that these children were subject to her authority. "We account ourselves bound," says principal Hill, in his *Institutes* (p. 3, sect. 2; p. 316), "to exercise a continued inspection over the Christian education of those who have been baptized, that as far as our authority and exertions can be of any avail, parents may not neglect to fulfil their vows." Being subject to her authority in their education, unquestionably they are not freed from that authority in their moral or religious deportment. The care which has been taken to provide for them sound and pious teachers, proves the contrary. So does the avowed ground, on which they are baptized, viz: to use the words of the Directory of the mother Church on baptism, "the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the Church, have by their birth, interest in the covenant and right to the seal of it." Hence it is added, "that children by baptism are *solemnly*

received into the bosom of the visible Church, distinguished from the world, and them that are without, and united with believers." If, then, these children are in the Church, surely they must be the subjects of her discipline. In conformity to this principle, all baptized persons are amenable to Kirk Sessions, to Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly. Even minors may be summoned before Church sessions (Sten. Col., b. 4, tit. 3, sect. 24); and finally, by the Assembly of 1642, "every presbytery is enjoined to proceed against non-communicating members;* which act, taken in connection with other acts, relative to discipline, and the avowed principle of the Church on this subject, must include all members, minors as well as adults, who have come to years capable of discerning the Lord's body. (Sten. Col., b. 2, tit. 4, sect. 12). In thus claiming the right of inspection and government over all baptized persons, within their respective jurisdictions, the mother Church, and our Church, perfectly agree with the Primitive Church, as also with the other Reformed Churches. A very brief detail of facts will be given in proof of this assertion.

I. The *Primitive Church* considered herself as the common mother of all baptized children, and exercised a corresponding care over them, that they might be trained up as a generation to serve the Lord. She did not indeed, in so many words, in her public Confessions, adopted and enlarged from time to time to meet prevailing errors avow the principle: nor was it necessary, for the principle was recognized in the requirement of "a promise or vow from the baptized person, that he would live according to the rules of Christianity." (Justin's Apology, Bingham's Ecc. Ant. vol. 4, b. xi. ch. 7, s. 6, p. 288). As this vow could not be made by infants, it was required from those who presented them. These persons, whether parents or others, besides receiving themselves, as members of the Church, the seal of baptism, became responsible not only for the instruction, but for the admonition, and rebuke, if necessary, of the children baptized. (Bing. Ecc. Ant. vol. 4, b. xi, ch. 8, s. 5). Individuals of eminence in the Primitive Church, incidentally avow the principle, and draw conclusions from it suited to the circumstances which led them to

* A similar rule is contained in the discipline of the French Reformed Churches, chap. 12, can. 11, Quick's Synodicon, vol. 1.

avow the principle. Thus Augustine, in his 23 Epist. to Boniface, says, "Children were presented to baptism, not so much by those in whose hands they were brought (though by them too, if they were good and faithful men), as by the whole society of saints. The whole Church was their mother." (Bing. Eccles. Ant. b. xi, c. 8, s. 8). Hence he concludes the Church is bound to maintain baptized *children*, who in the course of providence should be deprived of support. That this principle was in fact avowed by the Primitive Church in her practice, though not in words in her Confession, appears from the design of the rite of confirmation; the attention which was paid to the instruction of baptized children; and the discipline actually inflicted upon them in case of improper conduct.

First. It appears that a rite called Confirmation, was administered by the imposition of the hands, of the *Minister*, or Bishop, or Elder, together with prayer, on baptized children, at a certain age. Both Calvin (in his Institutions, b. 4, c. 19, s. 4), and Owen (in his Commentary on the Hebrews, ch. 6, v. 19, p. 33, vol. 3), acknowledge that this practice existed at a very early period in the Church. The latter thus states its design: "When they (that is, the children of believers, baptized in their infancy), were established in the knowledge of these necessary truths (of which he makes mention before), and had resolved on personal obedience unto the Gospel, they *were offered* unto the fellowship of the faithful: and here, on giving the same account of their faith and repentance, which others had done before they were baptized, they were admitted into the communion of the Church, the elders thereof laying their hands on them, in token of their acceptance, and praying for their confirmation in the faith." This rite, which originally was confined to those who were baptized in their infancy, was afterwards administered to adults, immediately upon their baptism. (King's Primitive Church, part 2, ch. 5. Bing. Ecc. Ant. b. xii, c. 1, s. 1). In process of time, when the Church became grossly corrupted in her practice as well as doctrine, it was administered to infants immediately after baptism, that they might receive the Lord's Supper. (Bing. Ecc. Ant. b. xii, c. 1, s. 2).^{*} This historical fact, whilst

^{*} This practice is still continued in the Greek Church. Smith's Account of the Greek Church, pp. 116 and 161.

it exhibits a most deplorable superstition, strikingly illustrates the design of *Confirmation*, as already stated from Dr. Owen. By this rite, "it came to pass," saith the judicious Hooker (in his *Eccles. Polity*. book 5, sect. 66, p. 236, of his works, fol. ed. Lond. 1723), "that children, in expectation thereof, were seasoned with the principles of true religion, before malice and corrupt examples depraved their minds; a good foundation was laid betimes for the direction of the course of their whole lives: the seed of the Church of God was preserved sincere and sound: the prelates and fathers of God's family, to whom the care of their souls belonged, saw by trial and examination of them, a part of their own heavy burden discharged; reaped comfort by beholding the first beginnings of true godliness in tender years; glorified him whose praise they found in the mouth of infants; and neglected not so fit an opportunity of giving every one fatherly encouragement and exhortation: whereunto *imposition of hands, and prayer being added*, our warrant for the great good effect thereof, is the same which patriarchs, prophets, priests, apostles, fathers, and men of God have had, for such their particular invocations and benedictions, as no man, I suppose, professing truth and religion, will easily think to have been without fruit." This rite of confirmation, thus administered to baptized children, when arrived to competent years, and previously instructed and prepared for it, with the express view of their admission to the Lord's Supper, shows clearly that the Primitive Church in her purest days, exercised the authority of a mother over her baptized children.

Secondly. The attention which was paid to the instruction of baptized children in the Primitive Church was great. The Christians, according to Mosheim (*Ecc. Hist.* vol. 1, p. 118), took all possible care to accustom their children to the study of the Scriptures, and to instruct them in the doctrines of their holy religion. Clemens Romanus praises the Corinthian believers, "that they commanded the young men to follow those things that were modest and grave:" and exhorts them to train up their children in the discipline of Christ. (Wake's trans. Manchester edit. 1799, pp. 2 and 15). Eusebius notices the great care of Leonides, the father of Origen, in the matter, (l. 6, c. 2); Socrates (l. 2, c. 9), takes the same

notice of the education of Eusebius Emisenus ; and Sozomen (l. 3, c. 6), in relating the same fact, says, this was done *κατα πατριον εθος*, according to the custom of the country. "Gregory Nazianzen (in the fourth century), peculiarly commends his mother, that not only she herself was consecrated to God, and brought up under a pious education, but that she conveyed it down as a necessary inheritance to her children : and it seems her daughter Gorgonia, was so well seasoned with these holy principles, that she religiously walked in the steps of so good a pattern ; and did not only reclaim her husband, but educated her children and nephews in the ways of religion, giving them an excellent example while she lived, and leaving this as her last charge and request when she died." "This," says Cave, "was the *discipline* under which Christians were brought up in those times. Religion was instilled in them betimes, which grew up and mixed itself with their ordinary labors and recreations." (Primitive Christianity, p. 173, 174, 7th ed. Lond.) As an instance of this, he quotes Jerome, as saying of the place where he lived, "you could not go into the fields, but you might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine dresser singing David's psalms." (Prim. Christian, 173, 174). Besides the instruction which was thus given by believing parents to their baptized children, these children, in all places where it was practicable, had, from the very commencement of the Christian Church, the opportunity of attending *catechetical* schools ; schools erected for instruction in *divine* and *profane* science. Such was the famous school of Alexandria, to instruct both in human and divine learning, which Jerome dates from the days of Mark the Evangelist. (Vol. 1, of his works, Col. Agrip. an. 1616, p. 105). In this school, Eusebius informs us (Eccles. Hist. b. 5, c. 10), Pantæus taught ; to him succeeded Clemens Alexandrinus (l. 6, c. 6) ; and to Clemens, Origen (l. 6, c. 19). Similar schools existed, according to Bingham (Eccles. Antiq. book 3, chap. 10, sect. 5), in Rome, Cesarea, Antioch, and other places. These schools it appears were kept in churches, where they were erected, or in buildings adjoining to the church : "which is evident," says Bingham (b. 8, c. 7, s. 12), from the observation which Socrates makes upon the education of Julian the apostate, that in his youth he frequented the Church (*βασιλικήν*), where in those days

the schools were kept." This practice was continued, even when the Church became corrupted. In the early part of the fourth century, Gregory, who was instrumental in converting the Arminians, and was afterwards their bishop, "set up schools in every city, and masters over them by the king's command, to teach the Arminian children to read the Bible." By the canons of some councils, charity schools were appointed to be erected in cathedrals and other churches. Especially in the seventh century, the sixth council of Constantinople; in the eighth century, Charlemagne set up schools in bishoprics and abbeys. In the ninth century, the council of Rome directed that there shall be masters in all cathedrals; and other places where it is necessary, masters and teachers, of the liberal sciences. Similar directions are found in the canons of the council of Toul or Savonieres, in Lorraine. (Dupin's 8th and 9th cent). From these few facts, the conclusion is inevitable, to adopt the language of the learned archdeacon Jortin, "to the Gospel, and those who embrace it, are due our grateful acknowledgements, for the learning that is at present in the world. The infidels, educated in Christian countries, owe what learning they have to Christianity, and act the part of those brutes, which, when they have sucked the dam, turn about and strike her." (Charge 1, vol. 4, of his sermons, Dub. ed.) The attention which was thus paid by believers, individually, and by the Church, collectively, to the instruction of children, proves the fact, that they were under the care and watch of the Church.

Thirdly. Discipline was actually inflicted upon baptized children, in the Primitive Church. "The censures of the Church," Bingham (b. 16, ch. 3, s. 11), informs us, "seldom or never touched them whilst *minors*, or children under age: there being more proper punishments thought fit for them, such as fatherly rebukes, and corporal correction; and to inflict the highest censures upon such, was rather thought a lessening of authority, and bringing contempt upon the discipline of the Church." Thus the same author says, Augustine, who flourished in the 4th century, (Epis. 159, to Marcellinus), assures us, the kind of punishment by stripes, was often or commonly used, not only by schoolmasters and parents, but by bishops in their consistories also. One of the rules of Isidore of Seville, who flourished in the sixth century, was,

"That they, who were in their minority, should not be punished by excommunication, but according to the quality of their negligence or offence, be corrected with congruous stripes."

II. The Reformed Churches of Bohemia, of France, of Holland, waiving any notice of others, in their standards, have recognized the principle, that baptized children are under the watch and discipline of the Church. By the two last, especially, specific regulations are given for the education of their children; and schools are directed to be established, under the inspection of the eldership, in every congregation. Thus we find, in the discipline of the Reformed Churches of France (chap. 2, can. 1, 2 and 5), it is enjoined, 1. "That the Churches shall do their utmost endeavor to erect schools, and to take care of the instruction of *their youth*. 2. Regents, and masters of schools, shall subscribe the Confession of Faith, and church discipline, and the towns and churches shall not admit any one into this office without the consent of the Consistory of that place. 5. A proposition out of the word of God shall be made by the scholars of EVERY CHURCH, as time and place may conveniently bear it: at which exercises, pastors shall be present to *preside and order* the said propositions." Thus, also, in the 14th chapter of the same book of discipline, can. 14: "Fathers and mothers are directed to be exhorted to be very careful of their children's education, which are the seed-plot, and promising hopes of God's Church. And therefore, such as send them to school to be taught by priests, monks, Jesuits, and nuns, they shall be prosecuted with all church censures. Those also shall be censured, who dispose of their children to be pages, or servants, unto lords and gentlemen of the contrary religion." (Quick's Synod, vol. 1, pp. xxvi and lv). In perfect agreement with this, the Reformed Low Dutch Church, in the rules of government, art. 21, directs "The consistories in every congregation to provide good schoolmasters, who are able, not only to instruct children in reading, writing, grammar, and the liberal sciences, but also to teach them the catechism, and the first principles of religion;" and, in art. 54, it is enjoined, "That the schoolmasters under the immediate care of the consistory, shall be obliged to subscribe the Confession of Faith, or instead thereof, the Heidelberg Catechism." Thus the Synod of Dort de-

creed, in their 17th session, that there should be observed a threefold method of catechising. 1. *Domestic*, by parents; 2. *Scholastic*, by schoolmasters; and 3. *Ecclesiastic*, by pastors, elders, readers, or visitors of the sick; and that all, whose duty it is to visit and inspect the Churches and schools, shall be admonished to make this the first object of their care. To carry this plan into effect, so far as respects the *second* method of instruction, the synod passed another decree, embracing the following resolutions: 1st. Schools for the education of children and youth, shall be established wherever they may be found necessary. 2d. Provision shall be made for procuring and supporting suitable teachers. 3d. The children of the poor must be provided for in these schools, or in others expressly for them. 4th. No person shall be appointed to the charge of these schools, who is not a member of the Reformed Church, furnished with testimonials of his orthodoxy and good morals, and who shall not previously have subscribed the Confession of Faith, and Belgic Catechism, and solemnly promised to instruct the children committed to his care, in the principles contained in the church standards. 5th. They shall, according to the age or capacity of the children, employ two half-days in every week, not only in hearing them repeat, but in assisting them to understand their catechism; shall examine them frequently; inculcate on them the necessity of regular attendance upon the ordinances of religion: accompany them to these ordinances, and promote their benefit from them. 6th. To promote fidelity in the teachers, and progress in the children, it shall be the duty of the pastors and elders frequently to visit these schools; to encourage and direct the teachers in the mode of catechising; to examine the children with mild severity, and to excite them to industry and piety, by holy exhortations, by commendations, and suitable rewards. "Such," say the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church in this country, in the year 1809, in their printed extracts, "such is the construction which our forefathers put upon the Constitution of the Church of Christ; and we must be at a loss whether more to admire their wisdom and fidelity, or to lament our languor and degeneracy in this point. A close adherence to a system like this, so far as means are connected with their end, is calculated to raise the visible Church and social state to as high perfection as this earth admits. It

is the system of complete organization, which promotes the unity; forms, while it preserves the habits; combines the efforts, increases the strength, and pours moral health into the fountains of society." (Christians' Magazine, No. 4, vol. 3, pp. 229, 230). Not less pointed and explicit on this subject did the New England Churches express their opinion, in the Cambridge Platform of Discipline, chap. 12, sect. 7: "They," that is, baptized children, such is their language, "are also under church watch, and consequently subject to reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof, for healing and amendment, as need shall require."

Though THE PRINCIPLE, that baptized children are subjects of church discipline, be thus acknowledged by the Reformed Churches generally, and by ours particularly, according to the unquestionable and laudable example of the Primitive Church, it is a lamentable truth, that it is not carried into effect in any of them, as it ought to be. In the earliest and purest periods of their existence, they did, in a commendable degree, act upon this principle. But now, from the most of them, if not all, the glory in this respect is departed. Children of the faithful, are still considered proper recipients of the privilege of baptism, yet they are suffered to live as if they were not subjects of Christian discipline. In too many instances, a superstitious regard has been paid to the mere rite of baptism, whilst the most deplorable neglect of the duties arising from, and connected with that rite, has been manifested, not only on the part of parents, but of church officers. This neglect appears to have originated in two mistakes on this subject.

The *first* is, that infant baptism is viewed as a sacrament to the parent, or parents only, and not to the Church or body of visible believers. The latter undoubtedly, as well the former, receive the thing signified, and sealed by baptism.—Baptism (says Boston), as often as it is administered according to Christ's institution, doth by his appointment seal the whole benefits of the covenant of grace, not only to the party receiving, but the whole of the body within the covenant (Body of Divinity, vol. 3, p. 299). Indeed, the former receive it only because they belong to the latter, constituting a part of them in their collective capacity: for the compact was made with Abraham and his seed, which the apostle (Gal. 3: 16, 29), explains to be his faithful seed, the Church. Baptism, being

thus a sacrament to the Church, as well as the Lord's Supper, for the confirmation of her faith, she is bound to pray for baptized children, and exercise suitable pastoral care over them, that the ordinance may not be profaned by them, but on the contrary, the thing signified in their baptism, may be enjoyed by them in their experience.

The *other* mistake relates to discipline. It is considered merely as the infliction of punishment, and as consisting in *suspension* and *excommunication*. But discipline is also a privilege, consisting in *instruction*, *advice*, *warning*, *reproof*, and *remonstrance*. Even when it assumes the awful form of an avenger of evil, it is for edification, and not for destruction. The authority of the Church is mild and parental. Her officers may not lord it over God's heritage, but must treat the whole visible family of the Redeemer as their spiritual children. When they are constrained to inflict judicial censures, they must do it in love, that the wanderer who is punished may be reclaimed. In this twofold light it is a privilege, as much as discipline is in a family, in a school, or in a state, by which *authority*, on the one hand, and *subordination* on the other, become sources of blessings to all who are in the Church of God. Both the *authority*, on the part of church officers, and this *subordination*, on the part of all church members, infants as well as adults, lie at the foundation of *discipline*. Without this distinction, well understood and carried into complete and universal operation, *discipline* becomes in the Church the instrument of faction to distract the members, or of corruption to screen delinquents from punishment. The Church of God, equally with civil society, rejects the absurdity of all who belong to her being both ruled and rulers. She recognizes, in the most unequivocal manner, the authority of parents over their children; of teachers over their pupils; and of magistrates over their subjects. Without interfering in the peculiar province of each, as far as religion is not concerned, she claims for her officers paramount authority in the house of God over all who are in that house; and requires that in matters pertaining to the interests of that house, the authority of parents, of teachers, and of magistrates, shall be so far subordinate to the authority of her officers, as to aid them in their duty; to be guided by them, and to receive the rebuke of love at their hand when deemed necessary. The two principles of *authority*

and *subordination* must be kept in view, as also the twofold nature of discipline, viz: *preventive* and *corrective*, in order that we may properly ascertain the manner in which the Church of Christ must exercise her authority over baptized children, that they may be trained up as a generation to serve the Lord. She must take care that they receive necessary instruction in the ways of righteousness and usefulness: and if they transgress, she must take care that the necessary corrections be administered to them. Her duty then, as a mother, possessing the authority of a mother over them, as children, owing to her the subordination of children, consists:—

I. IN PREVENTING TRANSGRESSION, BY AFFORDING THEM INSTRUCTION.

II. IN CORRECTING TRANSGRESSIONS, BY ADMINISTERING TO THE TRANSGRESSOR THE NECESSARY CENSURES.

The illustration of these constituent parts of the Church's duty, will necessarily include in it, as fundamental, all the reasonings, and the proofs, in support of the reasonings *which have already been offered*. It will also strike at the root of some popular, but gross and ruinous mistakes, on the subject of education, as well as on the relation which baptized children sustain to the Church. No conclusion ought to be made, or previous prejudice indulged, until the illustration contemplated be finished. Then an opportunity will be afforded, by taking the whole in connection, to judge whether the plan presented be according to the law and testimony, or not; whether it be such as to invite the experiment of trying it or not; whether it approves itself to the understanding, and the affections, not only as right, but as desirable.

DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO GIVE INSTRUCTION TO HER BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

I. The duty of the Church as a mother, possessing *the authority* of a mother, towards baptized children owing to her *the subordination* of her children, consists in preventing transgressions, by affording them INSTRUCTION.

The remark which is often made, that men need not so much to be *informed* of their duty, as to be *persuaded* to do their duty, is not well founded. Instruction is as necessary for acquiring the knowledge of our duty, as for acquiring the knowledge of any science or art. Sin, though it has not

annihilated any one of the faculties of man, has fearfully disordered them all, so that the understanding is blind, the will depraved, the conscience stupid, the affections sensual. Hence arises the necessity of a revelation from God, as also of a particular class of men qualified by God for teaching from such a revelation, the things which pertain to the peace, comfort, and happiness of sinners. The instruction which these men are directed to give, includes motives as well as truths; truths first, and then, motives. They must first convince the understanding, and then excite the affections. The Church, in her treatment of children, follows the mode which God has adopted in his treatment of sinners. And as the Spirit of God, by means of the instruction which his word affords, and the motives which it exhibits, destroys the dominion of sin in the hearts of believers, and keeps them from wilfully transgressing his law in their lives: so the Church affords her children that instruction, which is calculated, under the blessing of God, to develope their faculties, to furnish their minds with principles, and to form their habits; thus training them up in the way in which they should go, for a generation to serve the Lord. The persons to whom she commits their instruction, are the parents, the teachers in schools, or colleges, the church officers. A mere sketch, and no more, of the manner in which these persons respectively ought to conduct the instruction of children, will be attempted.

1. The first instructors of children are **THEIR PARENTS**. To these the Church, after having admitted the children presented by them in baptism to this sacrament, and all the privileges connected with it, commits such children upon the faith of their engagement that they will teach them the truth, and set them good examples, with the express understanding that they, the parents, are subject, from time to time, to the inspection of the Church by her officers, whether they perform their duty or not.

The first school of children is their mother's lap. Here they acquire their earliest impressions and ideas, which in a very great degree give the tone to their conduct in subsequent life. Here then the fear of God, and love to Christ, must be instilled into their minds. Thus Lois, and Eunice, the mother and grandmother of Timothy, acted, and God blessed their labor. To encourage other mothers, or those females who may in the

course of providence be called to take the place of mothers, the names of these female worthies are left on record in God's most holy word. How desirable then that all mothers should be pious, nay, how necessary! And yet, females are ordinarily educated, with a view to everything else, save that which gives dignity to their character, by making them permanently and extensively useful, viz: *the proper discharge of their duty as mothers*. It is certain, that to the want of true religion in mothers, a very large proportion of the wickedness of youth is to be ascribed, and also, that the virtue and godliness of many youth, under God, are owing to the lessons they have received from their mothers.

As the children advance in years, they become more particularly the care of their fathers, whose duty is to endeavor to increase the first impression and give them permanence, by enlarging their acquaintance with truth, as their minds enlarge. They must be taught the simple elements of the Gospel, before they can read; and, as soon as possible, the Bible must be put into their hands; its nature explained, and its importance urged upon them. The objection, that to use it in a familiar manner, or as a common book, will sink its consequence, and destroy its authority over the mind, is frivolous, and unfounded in fact. Equally destitute of force is the objection, that some parts of the Bible are calculated to fill the minds of children with improper ideas. *The first objection* is unphilosophical, and *the last* irreligious. Upon the principle on which the *first* depends, moral essays, or treatises on moral duties, ought not to be put into the hands of children: and upon that of the *last*, man, a child of corruption, is considered as a better judge of correct ideas—ideas suitable to be unfolded to children—than his God, who is perfect. Both the objections ought for ever to be banished from all who belong to the Church of Christ. Parents must teach their children to venerate, love, and obey, “all Scripture,” and must strive to make them mighty in the Scriptures. For this purpose, they must make the Scriptures known to their children, from their earliest years, as they were known to Timothy from a child. They must, moreover, teach them their Catechism, informing them of the design of such Catechism: and as they advance in it, referring them to Scripture passages, in support and proof of the answers which they commit to memory.

Their relation to the Church as baptized children, ought to be sedulously impressed upon their minds, as also their consequent obligation to walk in newness of life, and their subjection to the spiritual authority which Christ hath established in his Church. From the first dawns of reason, they ought to be taught to consider themselves as the LORD'S CHILDREN, solemnly dedicated to him, and bound to glorify him in soul and body. "The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, we are informed in the answer to the 167 quest. of the Larger Catechism, is to be performed by us, all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein: by being humbled for our sinful defilements, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements: by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body." All the parts of this answer, constitute so many distinct heads of instruction, on which parents ought to dwell, and about which they should be plain and explicit as well as affectionate. Particularly, ought children to be taught to pray for themselves, and parents must pray for them perseveringly. It is highly proper, nay, an incumbent duty, that each parent, if both have come under the engagements, should often separately retire with their children, and wrestle with God for a blessing on them. The impressions, which such scenes, often witnessed by the children, are calculated to produce on their young minds, it is hardly possible to conceive. Unless parents be earnestly engaged in prayer, and their children see it; and unless they exhibit uniformly a life consistent with the practice of prayer, and agreeing with the truth as it is in Jesus, they need not expect much religion in their children. And here it may be proper to remark, that

this fact affords a strong and irrefutable argument to prove, that those parents, who are in visible covenant with God, according to the principles already laid down, as recognized by the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and also by the confessions of other Reformed Churches, and those parents only, to the unqualified and utter exclusion of all others, are entitled to the privilege of Infant Baptism. If this be not the case, how can we expect that the children will be brought up in the fear of God? If they who present them do not pray, or live godly in Christ Jesus, we need not look for religion in the children. Those parents who are not in visible covenant with God, are themselves the cause *why* their children cannot be baptized. If their children suffer by this deprivation, the parents must ascribe it to their own hardness of heart and rejection of Christ. It is a perfect absurdity to think that children can, or will be, trained up aright, if we have no reasonable evidence to hope that their parents are right in the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives. The present deplorable state of thousands of baptized children, is chiefly to be ascribed to this, that their parents do not act as those who are in visible covenant with God.

2. Next to parents, TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES, are the instructors to whom the Church commits her children. And here it cannot but appear obvious to all, that a thorough and radical reform *must* take place in our schools and colleges, before *baptized children* can be properly disciplined. As the education of children in all parts, is the proper, the legitimate business of the Church, rather than of the State, so she is bound to see through the medium of her officers, not only that parents do their duty, but also in the same way to exercise her rightful superintendence over seminaries of learning.

No one ought to be admitted as a teacher of the children of the Church, who is not by profession a believer in the truths which she conceives essential to their best interest. No one ought to attempt to train up the Lord's seed, who is not visibly united to that Lord and his people. The perdition of thousands of children, it is to be feared, must be ascribed to their parents, who, either from indifference or a worse cause, have put them under the care of teachers who feared not God, and kept not his commandments. The utter inconsistency of

such conduct cannot but be obvious to all, who will exercise the slightest reflection, when the nature of education, and its influence over the mind and life, are taken into consideration. If we except the paramount power of God's preventing and converting grace, the language of the poet on this subject is true :

'Tis education forms the common mind,
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.

Upon the *fact* contained in this quotation, a fact which experience has taught mankind, the wisest of men have ever acted in all matters *with care*, except in religion. Children have been studiously trained up for their places in life ; but how few have been studiously trained up for God ! They have been put under the direction and instruction of teachers qualified to make them acquainted with the liberal arts ; with profound sciences ; with professional employments ; but no question has been asked, no solicitude felt or discovered, to furnish them with teachers qualified to make them acquainted with the fear of God : with faith in the Lord Jesus ; with the spirituality of the divine law ; with the corruption of human nature ; with the necessity of the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost : in short, with true religion, the religion of the Gospel. And yet, without this religion, they must be and remain destitute of the one thing needful for time and eternity. In this neglect of religion, as a primary concern in the education of children ; a concern as far exceeding all others as eternity exceeds time, there is a display both of *unnatural cruelty* and *deplorable ignorance*. The *cruelty* consists in this, that parents, professedly Christian, after having been instrumental in bringing into the world children in their likeness, possessed of a depraved nature, put those children in a place, and under circumstances where the depravity of their nature will rather be cherished and increased, than checked and corrected. The *ignorance* displayed is this, that the design of education is entirely perverted or frustrated. For *education*, using the term in its restricted sense, as a part of that extensive and thorough instruction which the *Church* is bound to give her children, and which those who are not in the Church must approve, must develope the faculties, and form the habits, by presenting principles to the former, and thus producing the latter in the course of time. Now what

subjects can so *develope* the faculties, as those which constitute the sum and substance of true religion? In these subjects, there is food for the understanding, the imagination, the affections, all the intellectual, as well as moral powers of the soul: inasmuch as the subjects relate to God; to salvation; to heaven; to hell; to eternity. The nature of these subjects is directly calculated to form the habits; for relating to those matters which involve our present and everlasting happiness, they directly arrest our conscience, and control our feelings. They overawe the passions, and insensibly, but powerfully, conduct to a life of external (if not more), decent conformity to God's most holy will. Such is the scope of true religion; such its commanding authority; such its present and its future everlasting consequences, that every department of knowledge is subordinate to it, because it derives its real value from its relation to true religion. Unless it directly or indirectly promote this religion; unless it aid in illustrating, applying, and defending the truths of this religion; unless it co-operate with the specific design of the Bible, to make us seriously and perseveringly engage in glorifying God, and making our light so shine before men, that they may glorify God, it does not deserve our attention; for it is not suited to our *character as men*, or to our *state as dependent and accountable creatures*. Hence the school master ought to be able conscientiously and honestly to make every part of his instruction subordinate to the best, because the eternal, interests of the children committed to him. As the most important matters deserve the first attention in common life; so, to all who make a profession of religion, decency, truth, honor, common honesty, natural feeling for the happiness of their offspring, and a legitimate fear of God's wrath, together with a sincere desire to promote his glory; all call for, and imperatively urge, the duty of first, and chiefly, and above all other matters, teaching their children to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. What a contradiction to this incontrovertible, this self-evident duty, is the conduct of those parents, who knowingly and willingly send their children to such instructors as do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not live godly in Christ Jesus; to instructors of whom they have no evidence, even in the judgment of charity, that they regard the Saviour and his cross! Mere piety, it is unequivocally granted, is not a sufficient

qualification to instruct youth ; but the *want of visible piety* utterly disqualifies the most able man from instructing aright. For the teacher ought to embrace every opportunity to introduce religious observations in his instruction. He ought to make all his instructions subservient to religion. He ought to catechize them with care, devoting a regular portion of time to this great and important duty. For this purpose he ought to use the plainest and most evangelical catechisms; catechisms, in which truth and error are in the most definite and express manner exhibited to view. He ought to be able to give a familiar exposition of such catechisms. He ought to have a portion of Scripture read every day, besides making the Scriptures a class-book, and to accompany the portion read with a familiar and affectionate application ; as also, from time to time, in the use of it as a class-book, to make remarks calculated to arrest the attention of the children, and to impress upon their hearts the truths which are read. He ought to pray with the children regularly, and to exhibit to them in his whole deportment an example of godliness. How can he perform his duty, of which a mere sketch has been given, if he possess not visible piety ? He ought to be what in the Primitive Church, and in some of the Reformed Churches, is called a Catechist. His school ought to be a nursery for the Church ; it ought to be under the care of the Church. In every congregation, one or more elementary schools of this description ought to be established by the Church.

The same care ought to be taken in regard to higher schools and colleges. No child of the Church ought to be sent to a seminary where religion is not the principal object of attention to the student, and where the officers are not in the visible connection of the Church. As the Church is divided into different denominations, each denomination ought to have their own college or colleges. The state cannot object to the incorporation of such institutions, on the ground of liberty of conscience, and toleration of all denominations ; for on that very ground each of them who have ability to do it, ought to be permitted to establish them for their own individual use. The emulation which these rival institutions would excite, combined with the enlistment of religious feelings, would under God's blessing, promote the interest of sound learning to a

higher degree, and on an extensive scale. The plan of uniting different denominations in the support of a college, necessarily prevents the introduction of religious instruction as a part of collegiate exercises. For a proof of this, we need only look to those colleges which are established on this plan. Little indeed is the information which youth acquire in them from their teachers concerning a Saviour, and the way of reconciliation with God through him. Not so ought to be the colleges which the Church fosters, and to which she sends her children. Constituting a link in the chain of discipline, by which the whole design of discipline can alone be completed, the design must be frustrated where this link is wanting. A great proportion of infidels can trace back the cause of their infidelity to the manner in which their education was conducted in the higher schools or colleges to which they resorted. The time of life when they were sent, their absence from home, and the systems of moral philosophy put into their hands, combined with the want of professed instruction in the Scriptures, and the want of visible piety in their instructors, have all contributed to produce scepticism, because all are calculated to call into exercise, rather than check, their passions and appetites. Perhaps one of the most powerful causes of this effect, is the fashionable mode of teaching moral philosophy, by which, pretending to exhibit a foundation for morals in what is called the law of nature, and to derive motives for that conduct from this law, *pupils are led* to the fatal mistake, that there is a law independent of the revealed will of God, which gives us any information of duty; *and also*, that we possess the power of performing this duty without the grace of God. As the law of nature is nothing else than the remains of an original revelation, so, in all the illustrations of that law, the pupils ought to be directly referred to that revelation. They ought to be taught, that the foundation of morals is to be found only in that revelation; that *morals*, in the correct sense of the phrase, can only be the result of a renewed temper, and that the power of performing duty flows from God. As the revelation of God takes cognizance of all the relations of life, of all our employments, and of all our pleasures, so there is no duty which is incumbent on us as members of civil society, as magistrates and subjects, as parents and children, as husbands and wives, as physicians and patients, as lawyers and clients,

as masters and servants, as neighbors and friends; in a word, no civil, political, professional, domestic, or religious duty, which is not directed either by the letter or the spirit of this revelation. This truth ought to be deeply impressed upon the minds of youth, that thus they may be accustomed to consider the revelation of God as the source from whence the knowledge of, and obligations to, all our duty is derived; and to estimate the systems of morals by this standard, and no other. In this way, and this way alone, moral philosophy can become a handmaid to true religion. Apart from true religion, in the manner specified, she is the direct ally and powerful friend of infidelity.

After young persons have left the schools or colleges to which they were sent by their parents, and returned home, they must be treated with equal care and attention as at any previous period. It is then that they must choose their profession or employment in life. In the choice of this they ought to be directed in such a manner, that their obligations to the fear of God should not be neglected. Some professions and employments are unlawful, such as those of stage players, keepers of lottery offices, gamblers, and the like. Parents ought never to consent that their children should embrace these. With respect to those which are lawful, children ought never to be put under the care of any one who is not visibly pious. They ought to look for such a lawyer, physician, merchant, or any other person, to whom an important trust is committed; for no other are worthy of their confidence. It is an eternal truth, that as there are some professions which religion condemns, so there are some members of lawful professions whom religion also condemns. Both ought equally to be discountenanced; viz: the irreligious profession and the irreligious member of a religious profession, i. e. of a profession which religion approves. Attention to the choice of a profession, to the character and conduct of him under whom children are placed to acquire the mastership of any lawful profession, is equally necessary with that which has been specified on the subject of schools and colleges. Both these, viz: the profession, as also the character of the teacher or master, in any profession or employment which is lawful, are legitimately and scripturally under the superintendence of the Church. She, by her officers, according to that form of doctrine and discipline which

she has adopted, has a right, and IT IS HER DUTY, to inquire into these particulars, as well as into those which have already been explained. She is as much concerned in the *professional employments* of her baptized children, as she is in the *colleges or schools* to which they are sent, and in the manner in which they are trained up by their parents; for the whole course of their *instruction*, as children, is only terminated when they begin to act their part on the theatre of life, no longer "under tutors and governors," whose duty it is to educate them.

3. THE MINISTRY, AND ELDERSHIP, are also instructors of baptized children; not exclusive of THEIR PARENTS, OR TEACHERS, but rather in connection with each of them. Constituting the *executive* of the Church, their duty is not only to superintend the conduct of parents and teachers, but also themselves to aid, by actual instruction, the efforts of both parents and teachers. We shall, for the sake of plainness, illustrate their duty in detail; first, in relation to the children; second, in relation to the parents of the children; and thirdly, in relation to their teachers in schools or colleges.

First. THE MINISTRY AND ELDERSHIP, are bound to give *catechetical* instruction, in its extensive sense, to the children. For this purpose, it is necessary that every session establish *catechetical schools*, under their immediate superintendence, direction, and government, to which children should resort at stated times, to be examined by them as to their knowledge of divine truths. The examinations should be conducted according to the catechisms adopted and authorized by the Church. The age at which, and the times when, attendance at these schools should be required, must be directed by the wisdom and consciences of church officers and parents conjointly. They cannot attend too soon after they are any way capable of profiting, nor too often in such seasons when they are not necessarily and properly, upon scriptural grounds, otherwise employed. The importance of catechetical instruction must be obvious to all. The Church has in all ages acknowledged it, and made provisions that it should be given. In this way, children are not only taught elementary truths—truths which pertain to their salvation—but they are also introduced to the notice and inspection of church officers; accustomed to their company, and trained up under their eye. It is not deemed necessary to say more of the duty. A few

remarks will be made on the manner in which the duty ought to be performed. The mere exercise of memory in learning questions by rote, is not sufficient. The judgment ought also to be exercised: and for this purpose, children ought to be questioned about the meaning of words, and the import of the scriptural passages which they repeat. As many words used to exhibit important doctrines, have a figurative, as well as literal meaning, the necessity of understanding them aright must be obvious to every one. The contents of the books of Scripture, noticing separately the history, biography, prophecy, doctrine, and rites, contained in those books, as also the gradual increase of light in relation to doctrines; the change in relation to rites; the fulfilment of prophecy, and the important lessons deducible from history; as these several particulars present themselves to view in the books, they severally ought to constitute an object of special instruction. Particular attention ought also to be paid to the evidences which accompany revelation, and to the government which the Lord Jesus hath instituted in his Church. The aim of the minister and session ought to be, to furnish the catechumens with doctrines, with a knowledge of the Bible, with the reasons on which faith in the Bible rests, and with a suitable acquaintance with the order of Christ's house. Thus baptized children will be able to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the religion which they have been taught, and in the subjection to which, according to the direction of its Master, they have been baptized.

Secondly. The Ministry and Eldership, ought to visit the schools or seminaries of learning within their jurisdiction. This duty belongs to the judicatory under whose auspices and authority the schools or seminaries are established. Every session is bound to inspect the congregational school or schools. And if a higher school or college be established by a number of congregations united in presbytery, or by a number of congregations in different presbyteries united in synod, that presbytery or synod must inspect said school or college. But if it be by the combined efforts of sessions, presbyteries, and synods united in General Assembly, that assembly must inspect the same. The manner of inspecting these schools, can only be by committees appointed for that purpose, with suitable instructions. The objects of inquiry must be, the system of instruction adopted; the rules of the schools or

colleges; the proficiency of the pupils; their moral conduct, and their knowledge of the Gospel, as well as their conformity to all its doctrines; and the character, deportment, capacity, and piety of the instructors. Especial care and attention must be paid to the subject of religion, both in relation to instructors and pupils, by the visatorial committees of the respective judicatories. Those instructors, whether clergymen or laymen, who make religion subordinate to literature, who consider themselves merely as teachers in letters, and not in religion, and act accordingly, ought to be removed from their places: and the clergyman admonished officially, and if obstinate, to be suspended or deposed, as the nature of their conduct may demand. For clergymen who profess to receive the doctrines of our Church, and yet make a sacrifice of these doctrines to what the world considers the interest of literature, when they relinquish the preaching of the Gospel and pastoral duty, for the sake of becoming instructors of youth in seminaries of learning, as they degrade themselves by this sacrifice, deserve to be degraded by the Church, in which they are unworthy officers. As with instructors, so with their pupils, the utmost fidelity must be exercised in relation to their spiritual and eternal interests. If the former have, from motives of vain glory, worldly applause, ambition, or fear of man, neglected the souls of the latter, the visitors from the ecclesiastical judicatories, must strive to remedy the evil, not only by punishing the former, but by instructing, admonishing, and otherwise disciplining the latter. Or if the judicatories do not think it discreet to clothe the visitors with these powers, let the visitors report facts as they find them to the judicatories, and let the judicatories proceed against the offending instructors and pupils, as they in their wisdom shall see fit. At all events the Church must exercise the power of superintending all seminaries of learning, so as to purge them both of improper instructors and of immoral pupils, that thus they may be fountains of piety, from whence shall flow streams to benefit society, and make glad the city of God.

Thirdly. The Ministry and Eldership ought to visit the families who are under their pastoral care. To do this aright, is both important and difficult. Important, because thus the Gospel is brought not only to the doors, but to the firesides of families, so that each individual may receive a word suited to

his case. Difficult on account of the difference of age, of taste, of state, which exist among the individuals in the same family. In the proper discharge of this duty, the connection between the officers and the members of a church, is not only preserved, but made the source of mutual comfort and improvement. Neither the regular preaching of the Gospel on the Lord's day, nor the friendly interchange of visits between the officers and members of a church, will or can supply the want of pastoral visitations. By these visitations, the Gospel, in its individual application to families, is preached from house to house, and an opportunity is afforded to a minister and the eldership, of becoming personally acquainted with all the individuals under their care, young as well as old, bond as well as free. They can also ascertain the actual state of families, together with the state of children; to what schools they are sent, what their knowledge is, especially of divine truth, and in what manner their parents fulfil their engagements in relation to them. These are subjects of information, useful to the minister for his preaching, and to the eldership in conjunction with the minister, for the exercise of discipline. A better view of the nature of this duty, of its extent, of its mode of operation, and the advantages which it secures to baptized children, cannot be given, than by quoting the act of General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the year 1708, on this subject. The act itself will be given at full length for the benefit and use of all.

"The following articles are unanimously recommended to the ministers of this Church, not as binding rules, but as a help to them in their visiting of families, viz: that ministers visit all the families in their parish, at least once a year, if the same be large, and oftener if the parish be small. And in the management of this work it is advised, 1. That ere a minister set out to this work, he labor to have his own heart in a suitable frame for it. 2. That he choose such a time in the year, as his people may be best at leisure to meet with him: and that due intimation be made of the minister's design to visit, that the people may order their affairs so that he may find them at home. 3. That he be accompanied with the elder of the bounds; with whom he may confer before they go forth to the work, about the state and condition of the persons and families of these bounds, that the minister

may be able to speak the more suitably to their condition, and as may be most for edification. 4. When they enter a house, after a short account of the design of the visit, they are to take an account of the names of the family, parents, children, and servants, and inquire for certificates from those who are lately come to the parish, and to mark them in the roll for catechizing : and to take notice who can read, and of the age of children when capable of catechizing. 5. Then the minister may speak to them all in general of the necessity of regeneration, and the advantages of serious religion and godliness : of piety toward God, and justice and charity towards men. 6. And next, more particularly to the servants, of their duty to fear and serve God : and to be dutiful, faithful and obedient servants, and of the promises made to such : recommending to them the reading of the Scriptures as they can, and prayer in secret, and love and concord among themselves : and in particular, a holy care of sanctifying the Lord's day. 7. The minister is to apply his discourse to the children, as they are capable, with affectionate seriousness ; showing them the advantages of knowing, loving, seeking, and serving God, and remembering their Creator and Redeemer in the days of their youth, and honoring their parents ; and to remember how they are dedicated to God in baptism ; and when of age, and fit, and after due instruction of the nature of the covenant of grace, and seals thereof, to excite them to engage themselves personally to the Lord, and to desire and pray for, and take the first opportunity they can of partaking of the Lord's Supper ; to be specially careful how they communicate at first, much depending thereon : and such of the servants as are young, are to be exhorted hereto in like manner, exciting them also to daily reading of the Scriptures, and to secret prayer, and sanctifying of the Lord's day. 8. After this he should speak privately to the master and mistress of the family, about their personal duty towards God, and the care of their own souls' salvation, and their obligations to promote religion, and the worship of God in their families ; and to restrain and punish vice, and encourage piety, and to be careful that they and their house serve the Lord, and sanctify the Lord's day. After this, it may be fit to exhort masters to take care that God be worshipped daily in their family, by prayer, and praise, and reading of Scripture. They

should inquire of them concerning the conversation and behavior of the servants, and their duty towards God and man, and how they attend the worship of God in the family, and the public worship on the Lord's day, and how they behave after sermon: if any of them be piously inclined; if they make conscience of secret prayer, and reading of the Scripture: if there be catechizing, and instructing of the ignorant and weak: if due care be taken in educating the children, and particularly if they be put timeously to school, and how they profit thereat: and how the Lord's day is spent after sermon, in the family, and in secret: all which the minister may mix with suitable directions, encouragements and admonitions, as he shall see cause, and most for edification. 9. He may inquire who have Bibles, and encourage them who are able to get Bibles of their own, to make diligent and religious use thereof, and to recommend to parents and masters of families, to have the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and other good books, for instruction in faith and manners. 10. If any be tainted with errors or given to vice, they should be particularly dealt with, and spoken to, either privately or before others, as may be most for edification, and all in the family are to be exhorted to watch and edify one another, and to carry towards any who walk disorderly according to the rule, Matt. 18: 15. 11. If there be any difference or division, either in the family or with the neighbors, the minister should endeavor to remove the same, and to make peace and to excite to follow it with all men, as far as possible. 12. It may be also inquired of those who have received tokens to communicate the last season for it, whether they have made use of them or not, and those who have communicated may be inquired privately, how they have profited thereby, and excited to remember to pay their vows to the Lord. 13. If there be any in the parish who keep not church communion with us, whatever their motives may be, ministers ought to deal with God for them, and with themselves in such a way as may be most proper to gain them, and exonerate their own consciences before God and his people, waiting, if God peradventure will prevail with them; who can tell, but our making them sensible of our tender love and affection to their persons, especially to their souls, giving them all due respect, and doing them all the good we can, yet still discountenancing their sin,

may in the end be blessed of God for their good. Jude 22 : 23 ; 2 Tim. 2 : 23, 25. All this should be carried on with dependence on God and fervent prayer to him, both before a minister set forth to such work, and with the visited, as there shall be access to, and opportunity for it." Act. 10, Ass. 1708. (Abridgement of the Acts, p. 343-346).

Though one or two things in this act are local, and refer to local peculiarities, yet the reduction of the whole to practice, according to its spirit and meaning, is easy. The place, respectively, of parents, children, and servants, are noticed, and the subjects of inquiry, as well as the matter of admonition, suited to each, suggested at considerable length. Every part of the plan is replete with information, both in presenting motives to the mind, to urge to family visitation, and in affording materials for a right discharge of the duty. To such a discharge under the divine blessing, we must look for one of the principal means of disciplining baptized children. It brings them directly in the view of the pastor and eldership, who, from a suitable examination, can judge whether the parents and teachers have done, or are doing, their duty to the children. The pastor and eldership thus exercise their superintending authority in a social, friendly way, with the affection of spiritual parents, and the familiarity of domestic intercourse.

NATURE AND METHODS OF THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE DUE BY THE CHURCH TO HER BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

II. The duty of the Church, as a mother of baptized children, possessing *the authority* of a mother over them as children, owing to her *the subordination of children*, consists in correcting transgressions by administering to the transgressors the proper censures.

These, we are informed in the Confession of Faith, chap. 30, sect. 3, "are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring other from like offences; for purging out of that leaven, which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel: and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer this covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders." The ends which are thus

contemplated by church censures, are of the last importance, both for the benefit of offenders, and the prosperity of the Church. One of these two ends will unquestionably be gained by the prompt, affectionate, and faithful discharge of duty in this respect. The duty is incumbent on the Church, and where her officers neglect it, she must suffer materially. Nor will offenders escape injury; for let it be remembered, that the infliction of censures is a *privilege*, as well as a punishment, because its tendency is to correct offenders, and to reclaim them. The idea of letting them censure themselves, by abstaining from the sealing ordinances of the Church, of their own accord, is absurd and condemnable. Absurd because it takes for granted, that an offender will administer suitable punishment to himself for his offences, whilst he retains his character of offender, and without an acknowledgment of his offence. Condemnable, because it makes the voluntary abstinence of an offender from sealing ordinances, which in itself, with no accompanying circumstances of an offensive nature, is a *grievous offence*, a sufficient punishment for any other offence; renders nugatory the injunctions of our Lord and his apostles, on the subject of discipline; and in its legitimate and unavoidable consequences, annihilates the very existence of government in the house of God. To the prevalence of this idea, and the line of conduct pursued by church officers in consequence of it, we may trace the decay of vital religion and visible holiness in many parts of the Church. How can it be otherwise? The Church retains in her bosom those who have offended, without requiring gospel-satisfaction, or even bearing official testimony against the offenders. Such conduct on the part of church officers, whilst it encourages and hardens offenders, invites others to commit offences. Against this sad and ruinous mistake the Church ought ever to guard: promptly administering, by her officers, those censures which the Head of the Church hath directed.

As the children of those who profess faith in Christ and obedience to his commandments, are members of the Church by virtue of the promise made to such parents, and therefore baptized, so they are necessarily, upon every principle of correct reasoning, subjects of discipline. The discipline which ought to be exercised towards them, must be suited to their character and years as children. That we may understand

this aright, let us for a moment advert to the modes, or ways, in which the censures of the Church are to be administered. They are, according to the Confession of Faith, chap. xxx, sect. iv. "Admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime, and the demerit of the person." Of these ways, it will at once be seen that the first is only applicable to children, and the last to adults. A few remarks relative to the first, illustrating the nature of admonition, and the manner in which it should be given, will precede an examination of the last ways, or, more properly, way, in which censure must be administered.

1. The nature of *admonition*, and the manner in which it should be given, will be sufficiently illustrated in the following particulars :

1. *Baptized children must be admonished* by THEIR PARENTS, when they offend. Though it is the duty of church officers to do this, they must commit the immediate exercise of it to parents and schoolmasters, reserving to themselves the right of superintending and examining both, in the exercise of it. The Church, when by her officers she administers to the children of believers the sacrament of baptism, commits these children back to their parents in trust, that they shall be trained up a seed to serve the Lord. Hence parents are bound narrowly to inspect the conversation and conduct of their children ; and when they see in them a departure from the ways of virtue and piety, to exhort and rebuke them. In the exercise of this part of their duty, is included chastisement when necessary. The father that spareth the rod, loveth not his child. Chastisement for offences is an ordinance of God ; and they who reject it, under the pretence of its uselessness or its severity, only discover their own folly. It ought never to be inflicted but in cases when the offence in itself requires it ; or in other cases, when continued admonition, solemn and affectionate, has failed, and in either case to be accompanied with prayer. In the same manner, those rebukes and exhortations, which relate to sins committed by children, ought to be given. They must be admonished *in the name of the Lord*, and corrected in that same name. In no instance ought anger to prompt the parents to the admonition or the chastisement. In every instance such admonition and chas-

tisement ought to result from a deep conviction of duty, and to be administered with the warmest affection towards those who are the subjects of it. The great reason why children, even of believing parents, are not more impressed by the expostulations, and warnings, and rebukes, which are given them, is because their parents expostulate, warn, and rebuke, not *in faith*, but according to natural affection. Living faith is as necessary on the part of a parent, for success in the admonitions or chastisements of his children, as it is necessary for the acceptance of any work. This however is forgotten too often by those who are commanded, and have promised, to "train up their children in the way in which they should go." Censures sure, but tender, ought ever to follow every offence. Not one ought to be passed by unnoticed, and unrebuked. Parents ought to *command* their children after them, to walk in the ways of the Lord, as Abraham did; and if they do not, to exert all the authority which they possess, in a manner which is consistent with, and originating from, living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be morally constrained so to walk.

2. Baptized children must be admonished by their *teachers* in the schools or colleges where their parents have placed them, whenever they offend. As the duty of every Christian teacher is to superintend and inspect the education of his pupils in such a manner that they may chiefly be taught to know Christ, and him crucified; so he is also bound to superintend and inspect their conduct, in such a way that they may live conscientiously according to God's law. It is not merely attention to their studies, nor external morality, that he must expect and require, but also attention to the will of God, and the performance of religious duties. Wherever he meets with transgression in the latter, as well as in the former particulars, he must admonish the transgressor: and if there be necessity for it, he has unquestionably the right of chastising him. But the admonition and chastisement ought to be given as already specified in the case of parents, affectionately, certainly, and in faith. The right discharge of this duty, clearly demands that the teacher be himself a pious man. Indeed every view which can be taken of the instruction of children in an enlarged sense, is calculated directly to produce, in thinking, serious persons, an utter reprobation of the idea, that visible

religion is not indispensably requisite in him who gives the instruction.

3. Baptized children must be admonished by the *officers of the Church* in their official capacity, whenever they become the subjects of such admonition. In the two preceding particulars, the officers of the Church act through the medium either of the parents or of the teachers. They merely inspect the conduct of both in the exercise of discipline, recommending it, and enjoining it upon them; as also, inquiring from them whether they do it or not, and in what manner it is done. As cases may and will occur, in which, after suitable care has been taken by both parents and teachers, the children still persist in their offensive conduct, then it becomes the duty of both parents and teachers to send for the pastor, that he may admonish the offenders, and pray with them. Let his admonitions be repeated as often as is deemed necessary, and if no suitable effects are produced, let the offender be brought by his parents and teachers to the session or eldership of the Church, that he may there be rebuked in love, and his case commended to God by prayer. It may be proper also, and perhaps best, to send first for an elder of the Church, before the pastor be called in, or the offenders be brought before the session; and if he be unsuccessful, let another be sent for; and if both separately be unsuccessful, let them conjointly endeavor to reclaim the offending children. All these attempts must be preceded, or closed with prayer. The children ought to be impressed with the truth, that the censure thus administered in private is a *religious ordinance*; and when the offenders are, after all the previous steps, summoned before the eldership or session, the whole of the proceedings in their case ought to be marked with solemnity, affection, and a deep sense of responsibility to the Head of the Church. The censures administered in private, or in session, must be suited to the character, the feelings, the understanding, and the state of children. Everything like unnecessary severity, or that harshness which is so repelling to children, must be sacredly avoided. For though in the Jewish Church, corporal chastisement was administered in the Synagogue, by the officers thereof to offenders,* and though at an early period the Primitive

* Beausobre and L'Enfant Introduction, pp. 161, 162, in Watson's Tracts. Vol. 8, Witsii Meletemata, pp. 18-20.

Church, imitating this example of the Jewish Church, thus punished minors, yet the spirit of Christianity, which is the spirit of adoption, and, as such, is hostile to the spirit of bondage, together with the habits of civilization originating in that spirit, forbid an imitation on our part of this mode of discipline in the Church, or the adoption of any measures which assimilate to it. It remains an everlasting truth, that the *father* who spares the rod loveth not his child: but the authority of the Church being *spiritual*, it is as true that the *Church* by her officers ought, now she is delivered from "tutors and governors," to exercise that authority in a spiritual manner, as has been illustrated.

When admonition has failed, and a suitable time has elapsed, with a distinct understanding on the part of offending children of this issue, the Church must proceed to *exclude* them from her communion. This duty belongs only to the Church, through the instrumentality of her officers. Neither parents nor teachers have any share in this part of the discipline of Christ's house. Even the civil magistrate may not interfere; for he is himself subject, in his official capacity, to the spiritual authority of the Church.

II. The nature of this *exclusion* will now be explained; the duty of the Church to administer this highest, and most awful kind of discipline, to baptized children, will be proved, and the manner in which the said kind of discipline should be administered, will be unfolded in some leading details.

1. This exclusion is commonly known by the name of excommunication. "There have been," says Dr. Owen, in his true nature of a Gospel Church, and its government (p. 208), "many disputes about it as unto its order and kinds. Some suppose that there are two sorts of excommunication; the one they call the lesser, and the other the greater: some three sorts, as it is supposed there were among the Jews. There is no mention in the Scripture of any more sorts, but one, or of any degrees therein. A segregation from all participation in church order, worship, and privileges, is the only excommunication spoken of in the Scriptures. But whereas on offending person may cause great disorder in a church, and give great scandal unto the members of it, before he can be regularly cut off, or expelled the society, some do judge that there should be a suspension of him from the Lord's

Table, at least to precede total or complete excommunication in case of impenitency. And it ought in some cases so to be. But this suspension is not properly an especial institution : but only an act of prudence in church rule to avoid offence and scandal. And no men question, but this is lawful unto, yea, the duty of the rulers of the Church, to require any one to forbear for a season from the use of their privilege in the participation of the Supper of the Lord, in case of scandal and offence, which would be taken at it and ensue thereon. And if any person shall refuse a submission unto them in this act of rule, the Church hath no way for its relief, but to proceed unto the total removal of such a person from their whole communion. For the edification of the whole Church must not be obstructed by the refractoriness of any one among them." These remarks of Dr. Owen, sufficiently illustrate the precise nature of what is called suspension from the Lord's Table for a season, in the 30th chapter of the Confession of Faith.

With respect to *excommunication*, it is necessary to enter into some detail, that its nature may be fully understood. And here let it be remembered, once for all, that as the Church is a spiritual body, so her authority is spiritual. *Excommunication*, therefore, does not consist in inflicting fines, or bodily punishment, or in depriving men of their civil and natural rights. It is a judicial deliverance of an offending member of the Church unto Satan, which "is no more," says Dr. Owen, in the same work already quoted, "but the casting of a man out of the visible kingdom of Christ, so giving him up, as unto his outward condition, into the state of heathens and publicans, which belonged unto the kingdom of Satan. For he, who, by the authority of Christ himself, according unto his law and institution, is not only debarred from a participation of all the privileges of the Gospel, but also visibly, and regularly divested of all present right to them, and interest in them, belongs unto the visible kingdom of Satan. The gathering of men by conversion into the Church, is the turning of them from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26 : 18), a delivery from the power of darkness, that is, the kingdom of Satan, and a translation unto the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1 : 13). Wherefore, after a man hath by faith, and his conjunction unto a visible church, been translated into the

kingdom of Christ, his just rejection out of it, is the re-delivery of him into the visible kingdom of Satan, which is all that is here intended. And this is an act suited unto the end whereunto it is designed. For a man hereby is not taken out of his own power, and the conduct of his own mind; not actuated, nor agitated by the devil, but is left unto the sedate consideration of his present state and condition. And this, if there be any spark of ingenuous grace left in him, will be effectually operative by shame, grief, and fear, unto his humiliation, especially understanding that the design of Christ, and his Church herein, is only his repentance and restoration." Of this design the fullest information is given by the Apostle, in 1 Cor. 5 : 5, when he speaks of excommunication. It is to be exercised, *i. e.* the offender is to be delivered unto Satan, "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" *i. e.* says the pious Dr. Guyse, "that by the blessing of Christ upon his own ordinance, the prevailing corruption of that man's life and heart, may be mortified and subdued: that he, through fear, grief, and shame, may be brought to a thorough humiliation, repentance, and reformation, in order to the saving of his soul from deserved wrath and ruin in the great day of account." To effect this design, the offender is entirely excluded from all fellowship in ordinances, which, in their nature, use, and design, belong to believers, though he may still attend on preaching, praying, and praising, as even open unbelievers may do. (1 Cor. 14 : 23, 24). Believers, moreover, are forbidden to eat with him. (1 Cor. 5 : 11). And also to have company with him. (2 Thess. 3 : 14). By both these phrases is meant ordinary intercourse from choice, which previous circumstances have not made necessary; as also ordinary conversations about temporal matters. Mutual engagements in trade, relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, or the like, cannot however be suspended by excommunication; for they rest on obligations, and involve in them duties, which excommunication cannot affect. *Excommunication* only relates to spiritual privileges; it touches not moral and religious duties. It deprives a person of the *former*, but leaves him as much bound to perform the *latter*, and as liable to God's displeasure for not performing them, as if the censure had never been inflicted; nay, the

design of the censure is, by depriving him of the privileges, to constrain him to repentance for a breach of duties, and to make him more careful and conscientious in relation to them in future. This view of *excommunication*, cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind, for it is calculated to correct a common mistake on this subject. The mistake is this : that excommunication is merely an awful display of justice in the infliction of punishment ; whereas it is also an ordinance of the Lord Jesus for re-claiming the offender. The Church, in attending to this ordinance, besides satisfying the claims of her own laws and her members, aims at the edification of an erring member. It is always administered with the hope that its issue will be, not only to purge the Church and to testify against sin, but also to save the person who hath backslidden. The Church, under the authority of Jesus Christ in this matter, acts as a tender, but faithful parent, who feels it is his duty to chastise his transgressing child ; or a skilful and humane physician, who finds it necessary to occasion present pain in his patient, for the attainment of future good. *Excommunication* is the highest, and therefore the severest, and most awfully solemn corrective which can be administered in the household of faith.

2. The duty of the Church, to *administer* this corrective to baptized children, will now be proved. This is evidently the doctrine of our Church : for in chap. 1, of "the Forms of Process," after the principle, that baptized children are members of the Church, and therefore, under its care and subject to its government, it is added, "when they have arrived at the years of discretion, they are bound to perform *all the duties* of church members." If, therefore, baptized children are bound to perform all the duties of church members when they have arrived to years of discretion, they unquestionably are subject to the highest censure that can be inflicted upon *church members*, when they have reached the years of discretion, if they do not perform these duties. Two questions here present themselves to view, each of which require an answer.

The first is, *What are the duties of church members?* They are, in a few words, adherence to the truth, in principle at all times, and obedience to all the precepts of the Lord Jesus. Thus, attendance upon the Lord's Supper, as well as prayer, praise, and the other ordinances of divine appointment, together

with the practice of justice, charity, and the other moral duties, which are prescribed by the divine law, is positively and peremptorily required from every *church member*. He has no warrant for making a distinction between the duties which God has enjoined upon all believers. If he neglects one duty, though he may perform another, he must be called to an account for that one neglect. A church member must walk in all the ordinances and institutions of the Lord, blameless, adorning the doctrines of God his Saviour in all things. Mere morality, according to the wordly sense of morality, is not sufficient, if the duties of religion, such as prayer, praise, religious conversation, and a participation of the sacraments, are omitted. The law of the Redeemer's house admits of no division, or selection of duties or privileges. It demands from all his members, obedience to *all the duties* he requires, and a participation of *all the privileges* he grants. From this demand, none of the members are excepted: and they who except themselves, manifest one of two things: either that they are still, spite of their profession, enemies of Christ by evil works, or that they are laboring under the influence of superstitious prejudices, or of grievous mistakes about present duty.

The second question which requires an answer, is, *When may baptized children be considered as having arrived to years of maturity?* As the word of God has given no positive direction on this subject, and as the faculties of one unfold sooner than those of another, no definite period can be specified. The best and safest rule appears to be this; when a baptized child discovers sufficient intelligence, if otherwise qualified, to be admitted to the Lord's Table,* and does not perform all the duties of a church member, the Church is bound to proceed towards him, as she would towards a member in communion. He is then, if the Church sees fit so to do, subject to her highest-censure. If this be not the fact, there is no meaning in the language of the directory already quoted. But there is a meaning which it conveys, such as has been noticed and illustrated. And in adopting this principle, that bap-

* The French Reformed Churches in chap. xl. can. 10, call the fourteenth year at least, a sufficient age, for the presentation of children to baptism, and require as a preliminary to such presentation, that the person or persons shall have previously communicated at the Lord's Table. Quick's Synod, vol. p. xlv.

tized children are subject to her government, and when of age, bound to act as members in full, of her communion, our Church has followed the best examples. The Primitive Church has already been brought into view on this subject. The Jewish Church also has been incidentally noticed. But to understand the nature of this duty aright, it will be necessary to pay more attention to the latter; for in all those particulars which a remote ceremonial, but moral, the practice of that Church, as far as it is founded upon the direction, expressed, or necessarily implied, of the Lord, ought to be followed by the Christian Church.

The Jewish Church was a body distinct from the Jewish State, and had a government distinct from the government of the State. There were ceremonial laws for the government of the Church, distinct from those which related to the State. The officers of the Church were distinct from the officers of the State. The magistrates, as such, were not rulers in the house of God; nor the priests and Levites, as such, without a special commission or authority, rulers of the State. The civil government was variable, and did actually undergo many changes; but the government of the Church remained the same. The nation did not worship in their political character as a State; nor did the Church in her spiritual character inflict civil penalties. Besides these particulars, which are undeniable facts, the mode of worship directed, the character of the acceptable worshippers designated, and the ecclesiastical punishments or correctives prescribed, are so many additional arguments to prove that the Jewish Church and the Jewish State were communities distinct the one from the other. This distinction Mr. George Gillespie, a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, has satisfactorily established in his *Aaron's Rod Blossoming, or the Divine Ordinance of Church Government Vindicated*, b. 1, c. 2 and 3. See also Godwyn's *Moses and Aaron*, b. 5, c. 1, and the Dutch annotators, on Deut. 17 : 8-18, and 2 Chron. 19 : 8, 10, 11. Godwyn, in the place just referred to, thinks Matt. 21 : 23, and 26 : 3; where the chief Priests and Elders are named, proves the distinction.

This distinction serves to correct the too common mistake, that moral cleanness or holiness of heart and life, as well as legal cleanness or legal holiness, was not required for a participation of the privileges of the Church under the Mosaic economy, as it is required under the Gospel economy.

Such cleanness, or holiness, was required from those strangers who applied for *circumcision*: for we are told that the applicants were examined narrowly, and only admitted when it appeared that they were moved by affection to the true religion and the glory of God. (See Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, b. 1, ch. 12).

The same holiness was required for partaking of the *Passover*; for we are informed in Ezra 6 : 21, that "all such as had separated themselves to the children of Israel, from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat."

Finally, the same holiness was required for the *worship of the temple*. In Ezek. 44 : 7, 9, God reproveth not only the bringing of strangers, who were uncircumcised in the flesh, but also the bringing of those who were uncircumcised in heart, that is, those who, by their want of visible holiness, proved themselves strangers to his grace. In Jer. 7 : 9, 10, 11, and in Ezek. 33 : 38, 39, the Lord sharply contendeth with those who did steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and yet presumed to come and stand before him in his own house. In the 50 Psalm, 16, God saith unto the wicked, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? In the 15 Psalm, the character of a temple-worshipper is accurately described. And to add no more, from Num. 5 : 6 and 7, and Lev. 5 : 5, 6, it appears that no person committing sin, or, in other words, scandalous or profane, might offer a trespass-offering, without previously confessing his sin. The character thus required for the *temple-worshipper*, was the same which was required for the participation of the privileges of *circumcision*, and the *passover*, as has been stated; for the temple-worship was in its nature sacramental. (Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, b. 1, chap. 8, 9). The morally unclean were excluded from each and all of these privileges, whilst they remained thus unclean. That this must have been the case, the very nature of legal cleanness unquestionably proves. For being ceremonial, it signified the moral character which a person ought to possess. It is utterly incredible that God looked to this legal cleanness merely, without regarding or requiring the things signified. Nay, he again and again rebuked his people for their gross hypocrisy

in this respect; rejecting their legal cleanness, and demanding moral cleanness.

These few hints are merely suggested to prove the propriety and necessity of imitating the example of the Jewish Church, in all those matters which were not ceremonial. A profession of the same state of heart, and line of conduct, was required for a participation of the privilege of circumcision, and the passover, which is required by our Church according to the Scriptures, for that of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This then being the fact, that the requirements in both Churches, for these privileges, are the same, let us see in what manner the Jewish Church treated delinquent offending members. This will throw light upon the subject of investigation, and aid in confirming, or in overturning some of the positions already assumed. Here it will be necessary to make a very few observations, explanatory of the advantages which the Jewish children enjoyed, and then state at what age children were considered adult members of the Church.

First. Jewish children were "trained up," with care, as a generation to serve the Lord. Parents were commanded (Deut. 6: 7) to instruct their children in the great duties of religion. Besides the attention which was thus paid to children, they had the opportunity of deriving benefit from schools. These were established in every city and province, in which children were taught to read the law. There were also academies in which the doctors gave comments on the law, and taught the traditions to their pupils. (Godwyn's Moses and Aaron, b. 2, c. 2; Jennings's Jewish Antiquities, b. 2, c. 2; Basnage's History of the Jews, b. 5, c. 5; Knibbe's Republyk der Hebreëen, 569-571).^{*} The Christian Church, in providing for the instruction of her children, has thus followed the example of the Jewish Church.[†]

Second. Scripture gives us no information, about the time when children were considered and treated as adults, but the

^{*} Knibbe, in the work above quoted, b. x. c. xi. gives a particular account of the manner in which Jewish children were educated.

[†] For the honor of the Church of Scotland, it ought to be known, that "*the first book of discipline*," adopted in 1560, included in it a complete plan for "the virtuous and godly education of youth." In this plan we find parochial schools, academies, and universities, with the course of education in each of the universities, distinctly marked out. Spotswood, in his History of the Church of Scotland, b. 3, gives the whole book of discipline. A good analysis is contained in Cook's History of the Reformation in Scotland, vol. 2, chap. 18.

Jewish doctors say that it was thirteen. At that age, according to them, a child became what they call a son of the commandment, *i. e.* one who was bound to perform all the duties of church members. (See Ainsworth, on Num. 9: 13; Lewis, *Antiquities of the Hebrews*, vol. 2, p. 450; Knibbe's *Rep. der Heb.* p. 570).* The silence of Scripture on this subject, and the information of the Jewish doctors, both tend to prove the propriety and eligibility of the rule already suggested. The age of thirteen being that which in the Jewish Church, according to the testimony of their writers, constituted adult membership, was that in which the children became subject to the highest censures of the Church. At this age we are told the command of God, in Gen. 17: 14, was carried into effect, and at this age the children were bound to eat the passover.

1. The command of God in Gen. 17: 14, was this, "The uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant;" *i. e.* a male, whether of Abraham's own seed, or born in his house, or acquired by money; who being come to the years of discretion (*viz.*: thirteen, as above mentioned), his circumcision having been neglected by his parents or master, shall not then see to his own circumcision, such an one is guilty, and of whatsoever people he be, he shall be cut off from his people; not from the earth, or from the land of the living; but from his people: more plainly, *Exod.* 12: 15; *Num.* 19: 13; from Israel: most plainly from the congregation (or Church of Israel), *Exod.* 13: 19; *Num.* 19: 20, that is, shall be removed from the fellowship of the saints, or as God by *Ezek.*, chap. 12: 9, expresses himself, "shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel." (See *Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, chap. 5, b. 1; *Witsii Ocon.* b. 4, chap. 8, sec. 11). The reason assigned for this cutting off, is, "he hath broken my covenant," *i. e.* saith Boston, "he hath thrown it away, or trampled it under foot, as refuse." The punishment was thus suited to the crime. The offender had free access to the covenant of grace, with the righteousness of faith, and all the other benefits of it: whether he was

* Knibbe says the age specified by the Jewish doctors was 14.

of Abraham's seed or not, being incorporated with Abraham's family, he was under the obligation of a law to receive the Covenant, personally to enter into it, and in token thereof to receive the seal of it, 5: 11, 12, 13. "He is come to years, and capable of judging for himself; and the hazard of refusing is told him. But he contemns the seal; he will not circumcise himself. Thus he makes void the Covenant, making the device of heaven for salvation useless, and of none effect, to himself, by his obstinacy; he throws it away contemptuously, and treads it under foot." (Body of Divinity, vol. 3, p. 299). Therefore he must be re-delivered to the kingdom of Satan, by being cut off from the visible kingdom of God.

2. At the age of discretion, *i. e.* thirteen years, the circumcised children became sons of the commandment, *i. e.* were bound to perform the duties of adult members. One of these duties was eating the passover, the requirements for which have been already noticed. They who did not eat the passover, were subject to the censures of the Church. In Num. 9: 13, a direction is given to *cut off those* who did not eat the passover, if they were clean and not on a journey. Though the cleanness noticed was legal; yet as that legal cleanness signified and demanded moral purity, it follows that he who did not profess the cleanness of heart required by the outward ceremonies, was excommunicated. He might profess it insincerely, but of that the Church could take no cognizance. External conduct, attendance on outward forms, and a confession with the mouth, is all of which she can judge. Where these did not indicate a right state of heart, the passages already quoted from Ezekiel and Jeremiah, clearly prove that excommunication ought to be administered.

From the manner in which the Jewish Church treated circumcised children, we can see the propriety of the rule of our Church about baptized children. If they fail of performing what they are bound to perform according to the ans. to the 167 ques. of the Lar. Cat. as already quoted, if they do not discharge all the duties of members when they have reached the age of discretion, then let them be dealt with accordingly. If at that age, after having had all the care and attention already prescribed as necessary, they do not conform to all the institutions of Jesus Christ, there is every reason to suppose, that they will commit such open sins as will make it evident

to all that they deserve to be cut off; or if not, they will still deserve to be thus cut off,

1. For not improving their religious education.
2. Slighting warnings administered by parents, teachers, and ministers.
3. Neglecting to fulfil the vows which baptism imposes.
4. For irreligion, breaking the covenant of their God.

The necessity and propriety of this measure cannot but appear obvious, not only as it regards the Church, for the above-mentioned reasons; but also as it regards the offenders themselves. Let it be recollected, that the design of excommunication, as has been stated, is to "save the soul of the offender," and there will be but little difficulty in considering it as calculated to promote his best interest, and therefore, as a privilege to him. It may be the very ordinance which Christ has determined to bless, after having withheld his blessing from all the other ordinances.

3. We proceed, lastly, to consider the manner in which excommunication is to be administered to baptized children. This is the same with that specified in our Directory for communicants. All the preliminary measures of admonition and suspension, must have been attended to, before it is the duty of the Church to think of the last; and when they consider it their duty to proceed to the last, they must first ask advice of presbytery or synod, who of course will be put in possession of the case. In every instance, patience, tenderness, lenity, regret, compassion, and other feelings of the same nature, must be cherished and displayed, so that the offender may see that duty, and not caprice, requires his punishment. When these feelings are accompanied by fervent prayer, and spring from living faith, there is reason to hope that this part of discipline will be crowned with a blessing. At all events it must be administered with the disposition of redeemed sinners, and the hope of benefit to the offender, and glory to God. *

JAMES RICHARDS,
SAMUEL MILLER,
JOHN B. ROMEYN,

Philadelphia, May 30, 1812.

Committee.

BOARD OF PUBLICATION OF THE REF. PROT. DUTCH CHURCH.

SUBSTANCE OF THE FORM FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM, USED IN THE REF. PROT. DUTCH CHURCH.

The principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism are these three: *First*, That we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, insomuch that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God except we be born again: which is signified by the application of water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Secondly. Holy Baptism witnesses and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ, for when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father seals to us that he makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for his children and heirs. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, God the Son seals unto us that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, so that we are accounted righteous before God. In like manner when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, God the Holy Ghost assures us that he will dwell in us and apply that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the elect in life eternal.

Thirdly. Whereas, in all covenants there are contained two parts; therefore, are we through baptism obliged unto new obedience, viz: that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

TO BE USED IN THE BAPTISM OF A CHILD.

And although our young children do not understand these things, they are not therefore to be excluded from baptism; for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they in like manner received unto grace in Christ. For God said unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 17 : 7.) This is confirmed by the Apostle Peter, saying (Acts 2 : 39). For the promise is unto you and your children. Therefore God formerly commanded them to be circumcised, which was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith; and therefore Christ also embraced them, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Forasmuch as baptism is come in the place of circumcision, infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of his covenant. And parents are in duty bound, further to instruct their children herein, when they shall arrive at years of discretion. That, therefore, this holy ordinance of God may be administered to his glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of his Church, let us call upon his holy name.

Here follows Prayer; then the usual questions are asked, and on being answered affirmatively, the rite is administered; and the whole service is concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving.



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ON REVIVALS.

Extract from a Synodical Letter of the Presbyterian Church.

A FOURTH means of obtaining a revival of religion, such as is to be desired, is a conformity to God's method of bringing salvation to the children of his people.

While the work of God, in the economy of grace, by which he gives salvation and eternal life to men, is supernatural, and transcends all mere natural operations, it nevertheless proceeds in conformity to the essential principles of the human constitution, and the analogies of nature. As the period of childhood and early youth is that in which, in natural things, the seeds of knowledge are sown, character is formed, and the course of life is determined; still more eminently true is all this of what belongs to the supernatural and spiritual life, by so much as the obstacles and hindrances, found in the alienation from the life of God, and opposition to all spiritual good of our fallen nature, are greater in the case of the formation of Christian character, and the direction of Christian life, than in the case of what is merely natural and belonging to this world.

This, therefore, is a means of promoting true religion, of whose indispensable necessity we cannot speak in terms too strong and urgent. If everywhere, parents, pastors, and churches, banishing from their minds the vague and undefined, but false notion, alike contrary to the nature and genius and spirit of Christianity, that the children of God's people are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, or at most have but a quasi-citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, would clearly comprehend their true covenant relation to Christ and to God in him; if entering into this divine constitution of the kingdom of God, with an intelligent understanding and appreciation of its gracious provisions in this behalf, they would, in the exercise of true, living, and confiding faith, dedicate their little ones to God, according to the tenor of his covenant with them and their seed, pleading for them its promises, and expecting the fulfilment of these promises in the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and if day by day, morning and evening, along with the reading of the Scriptures, the voice of psalms, and the offering of prayer, in all their habitations, these children of the covenant were diligently, faithfully, zealously instructed in divine things, and thus all the families of the Church were nurseries of Christian knowledge and piety; if this condition of things, this system of agencies and means were once to prevail, it would be, through all our churches, the in-bringing of a revival of religion which would not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, which goeth away, but abide through many generations, making the Church indeed as the garden of the Lord.